

Council of the District of Columbia OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004  
2020 MAR 13 PM 2:44

**TO:** Nyasha Smith, Secretary of the Council  
**FROM:** Brianne K. Nadeau, Chairperson of the Committee on Human Services  
**RE:** Closing Hearing Record  
**DATE:** 03/13/2020

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Dear Ms. Smith,

Please find attached copies of the Agenda, Witness List, and testimony for the Committee on Human Services performance oversight hearing on the Child and Family Services Agency held on February 12, 2020.

The following witnesses testified at the hearing or submitted written testimony to the Committee:

1. Public Witnesses

1. Judith Meltzer, Executive Vice President, Center for the Study of Social Policy
2. Judith Sandalow, Executive Director, Children's Law Center
3. Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Senior Policy Attorney, Children's Law Center
4. Ruqiyah Anbar-Shaheen, Director of Early Childhood Policy and Programs, DC Action for Children
5. Kristina Fleming, Public Witness
6. Makiah Harris, Public Witness
7. Kiana Harrison, Public Witness
8. Dr. Cheryl Anne Boyce, Chair, Mayor's Advisory committee on Child Abuse and Neglect
9. Donte Massey, Public Witness
10. Stephanie McClellan (on behalf of Marla Spindel, Executive Director, DC Kincare Alliance)
11. Margie Chalofsky, Executive Director, Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center
12. Wayne Enoch, President, AFSCME Local 4201
13. Marcia Huff, Deputy Director, Young Women's Project
14. Amy Javaid, A Wider Circle
15. Olivia A. Chase, Public Witness (*no written testimony*)
16. Katie Rollins, Public Witness (*no written testimony*)

17. Karen Feinstein, Executive Director, Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative
18. Mae Best, Executive Director, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative
19. Dionne Bussy-Reeder, Executive Director, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
20. Erica Coston, Program Director, North Capitol Collaborative and Mayfair Mansion and Paradise at Parkside
21. Melissa Millar, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Community of Hope
22. Debby Shore, Executive Director, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc
23. Cherie Craft, CEO, Smart from the Start
24. Roger Bell, Program Manager, Life Deeds, Inc.
25. Tiffany Williams, Chief Program Officer, Martha's Table
26. Leslie Allen, Maryland State Administrator, Children's Choice
27. Isabelle Suero-Stackl, Program Manager, Latin American Youth Center
28. Jordan Garrison, Associate Program Manager, Capital Area Asset Builders
29. Robinette Rascoe, Public Witness
30. Dr. Lavonne Shaw, Public Witness
31. Christopher Nace, DC International School
32. Caroline Owens, Public Witness (*no written testimony*)
33. Patricia Sullivan, Collaborative Solutions for Communities
34. Dashonta Bland, Collaborative Solutions for Communities
35. Sthefany Pena, Public Witness
36. Brandon Rapp, Public Witness
37. Rahketa Steele, Public Witness (*for the record*)
38. Julia Tutt, Public Witness (*for the record*)
39. Dr. Sheryl Brissett Chapman, Executive Director, The National Center for Children and Families

## 2. Government Witness

1. Brenda Donald, Director (*with addendum*)



**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**AGENDA & WITNESS LIST**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

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**COUNCILMEMBER BRIANNE K. NADEAU, CHAIRPERSON  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**ANNOUNCES A PERFORMANCE OVERSIGHT HEARING FOR THE**

**CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 11 a.m.  
Room 500, John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004**

**AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST**

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. OPENING REMARKS**
- III. PERFORMANCE OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**A. Public Witnesses**

- 1. Judith Meltzer, Executive Vice President, Center for the Study of Social Policy
- 2. Judith Sandalow, Executive Director, Children's Law Center
- 3. Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Senior Policy Attorney, Children's Law Center
- 4. Ruqiyah Anbar-Shaheen, Director of Early Childhood Policy and Programs,  
DC Action for Children
- 5. Patrick Watkins, Public Witness
- 6. Kristina Fleming, Public Witness
- 7. Kiana Harrison, Public Witness

8. Christian Greene, Public Witness
9. Julia Tutt, Public Witness
10. Donte Massey, Public Witness
11. Marla Spindel, Executive Director, DC Kincare Alliance
12. Dr. Cheryl Anne Boyce, Chair, Mayor's Advisory committee on Child Abuse and Neglect
13. Margie Chalofsky, Executive Director, Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center
14. Wayne Enoch, President, AFSCME Local 4201
15. Marcia Huff, Deputy Director, Young Women's Project
16. Vernita Grimes, Public Witness
17. Karen Feinstein, Executive Director, Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative
18. Lissette Bishins, Executive Director, Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative
19. Mae Best, Executive Director, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative
20. Dionne Bussy-Reeder, Executive Director, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
21. Erica Coston, Program Director, North Capitol Collaborative and Mayfair Mansion and Paradise at Parkside
22. Melissa Millar, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Community of Hope
23. Debby Shore, Executive Director, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc
24. Cherie Craft, CEO, Smart from the Start
25. Amy Javaid, A Wider Circle
26. Roger Bell, Program Manager, Life Deeds, Inc.
27. Tiffany Williams, Chief Program Officer, Martha's Table
28. Felicia Jones, Senior Director of Parent Initiatives, Martha's Table
29. Kym Richardson, Program Administrator, Life Deeds, Inc.
30. Lynette Haskins, Public Witness
31. William Miles, Public Witness
32. Caroline Owens, Public Witness

33. Dr. Lavonne Shaw, Public Witness
34. Robinetta Rascoe, Public Witness
35. Brandon Rapp, Public Witness
36. Jakia Carroll, Public Witness
37. Isabelle Suero-Stackl, Program Manager, Latin American Youth Center
38. Leslie Allen, Maryland State Administrator, Children's Choice
39. Jordan Garrison, Associate Program Manager, Capital Area Asset Builders
40. Dashonta Bland, Collaborative Solutions for Communities
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42. Katie Rollins, Public Witness
43. Olivia A. Chase, Public Witness
44. Christopher Nace, DC International School
45. Dr. Sheryl Brissett Chapman, Executive Director, The National Center for  
Children and Families

**B. Government Witness**

1. Brenda Donald, Director

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**



**Center for the  
Study of  
Social Policy**  
Ideas into Action

**Testimony of  
Center for the Study of Social Policy  
Court-appointed Monitor for *LaShawn A. v. Bowser*  
Judith Meltzer, Center for the Study of Social Policy  
Council of the District of Columbia, Committee on Human Services  
Oversight Hearing, Child and Family Services Agency  
February 12, 2020**

Thank you, Chairperson Nadeau and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony at the Oversight Hearing of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). My name is Judith Meltzer, President of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), and the Court-appointed Monitor for the *LaShawn A. v. Bowser* federal class action lawsuit. As federal Court Monitor, CSSP independently assesses and reports to the federal Court and the public on the District of Columbia's compliance with the outcomes and standards of the *LaShawn* Modified Final Order (MFO) and its most recent update, the Exit and Sustainability Plan (ESP), which was developed by the parties last summer, and adopted by the Court on October 31, 2019.

I will discuss the ESP in a moment, but I want to begin with our assessment of the CFSA's functioning and activities toward positive outcomes for the children and families it served in 2019. Last year, CFSA continued to move forward with its plans to become a more self-critical and correcting, quality child welfare system that helps keep children safe in their families and community. As I have said before, CFSA now is quite a different agency than when federal court oversight began. This is evident in the sustained commitments from District leaders – including the Mayor, the Council, and CFSA's leadership team – and in better outcomes for children and families served. Significantly, most children now being served by CFSA remain in their own homes and with their families, and the foster care population is currently below 800 children. The District is also leading the way in planning, developing, and implementing a continuum of prevention services that seek to support young children and families within their communities and neighborhoods, both for those without formal child welfare system intervention through the Mayor's Families First DC initiative, and those that have some involvement with the child welfare system through the Title IV-E Family First Prevention Plan. CFSA with its District partners and related human services agencies has been thoughtful, deliberate, and innovative in developing its Title IV-E Family First Prevention Plan and is now moving forward with implementation.

As the District pursues exit from federal court oversight, a revised *LaShawn* Exit and Sustainability Plan (ESP) was approved by the Court last year. This plan recognizes the substantial achievements the District has made in many areas over the past decade, and removes from direct court monitoring 56 Exit Standards that have each been achieved and sustained over several years. This in and of itself is a significant accomplishment.

The ESP includes 23 performance and outcome measures that remain to be achieved before the District fulfills its legal obligations under *LaShawn*. These remaining measures fall within seven general areas of practice including: 1) child protective services (CPS) investigations; 2) case planning and services to families and children to promote safety, permanency, and well-being; 3) social worker visitation to children experiencing a new placement, and visits between social workers and parents, and parents with their children; 4) appropriate and stable placements for children in foster care; 5) timely permanency; 6) timely provision of dental care, and distribution of Medicaid numbers and cards to caregivers; and, 7) maintaining appropriate caseloads for social workers. Most of these areas of practice are interrelated. For example, timely permanency is supported by regular family time (visits) between children and their parents, and through the development of individualized case plans and connection to services that engage families and meet their underlying needs.

CFSA also committed in the ESP to expand its self-regulating activities, enhance and strengthen its continuous quality improvement systems, and produce and publish annual public reports that support community accountability.<sup>1</sup> This includes creating and/or updating its written policies, training staff on them, and disseminating them widely so that workers, partners, families, and advocates know what is to be expected and required when a child or family is involved with the child welfare system, and can uphold mutual accountability. CFSA has committed to keeping all of its policies current, and maintained on its website for transparency and accessibility to the public. CFSA has already moved forward with a critical public accountability commitment of the ESP, launching a public data portal or dashboard that provides easy access to current performance data on multiple indicators within CFSA's Four Pillars framework<sup>2</sup>. Some examples of indicators include the number of children and families served by CFSA, demographic characteristics, and information on the placement of children in foster care, permanency exits, and more. The data dashboard will be updated quarterly and grow to include data on additional indicators.

The ESP included other specific commitments designed to address some of the remaining benchmarks and performance challenges. Despite the overall reduction of children in foster care – a significant achievement – CFSA has struggled with creating and sustaining a placement array to ensure stable placements for every child who needs one and particularly for older children with

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<sup>1</sup> The annual reports include a Needs Assessment and Resource Development Plan, and Financial Support for Community-Based Services. These reports will be publicly available within 30 days of finalization.

<sup>2</sup> CFSA's Four Pillars include the Front Door, Temporary Safe Haven, Well Being, and Exit to Permanence.

challenging needs. To address the placement problems that have sometimes resulted in children sleeping in the CFSA office building overnight, CFSA committed to improve and expand the placements available. Specifically, the ESP identifies a series of actions to be taken by the end of last year or the end of January 2020, to:

- Recruit and license a new type of foster home placement – Stabilization Observation Assessment Respite (SOAR) foster parents – with the capacity to serve a total of four children;
- Contract with an additional private provider to offer Intensive Foster Care placements with therapeutic services for 36 children;
- Secure six congregate care placements for children with autism spectrum disorder;
- Secure six new behavioral/therapeutic congregate care placements for children; and
- Recruit and license new family foster homes by January 31, 2020, with new capacity for 50 children, producing a net increase of capacity for 25 children.

CFSA also committed to continually reassess its placement array to ensure it has sufficient placements to appropriately match all children in its care with appropriate and stable caretakers.

Performance data for April through December 2019 for the majority of ESP measures are still being analyzed and validated by members of my team for inclusion in the next monitoring report, so I am unable to share those specific details today. Our next monitoring report will be shared with the Court during a status hearing scheduled for May 5, 2020. This report will be an important next step in assessing the District's progress toward fulfilling its remaining obligations to the Court, and ultimately to children, families, and the community. The Parties will be meeting again later next month to review the progress made and consider next steps toward fulfilling the requirements necessary for exit. Thank you for providing this opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions the Council may have.



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Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council  
Committee on Human Services  
February 12, 2020

Public Hearing:  
Performance Oversight Hearing  
Child and Family Services Agency

Judith Sandalow  
Executive Director  
Children's Law Center

Good morning Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Judith Sandalow. I am the Executive Director of Children's Law Center<sup>1</sup> and a resident of the District. I am testifying today on behalf of Children's Law Center, which fights so every DC child can grow up with a loving family, good health and a quality education. With nearly 100 staff and hundreds of pro bono lawyers, Children's Law Center reaches 1 out of every 9 children in DC's poorest neighborhoods – more than 5,000 children and families each year. Children's Law Center recognizes and applauds numerous CFSA's Fiscal Year 2019 successes and, as advocates for the city's youth, we also lift up the areas where the agency's performance needs improvement.

### **The Tale of Two Agencies**

Each year we strive to submit coherent comments on the performance of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) based on the written responses provided by the Agency in response to this Committee's oversight answers and our experiences representing the best interests of hundreds of children in foster care and representing or working with hundreds of foster parents and relative caregivers. Once again, we tell the tale of two agencies because CFSA's outcomes are so varied. In some areas CFSA has exceeded all expectations and shown the D.C. Council (and the nation) why it is considered a national leader in the child welfare community. At the same time, the



children in CFSA's care have had outcomes and experiences that are undeniably unacceptable.

### *Positive Steps Forward*

During FY19, CFSA showed determination and creativity in some critical programmatic areas. For example, CFSA was the first child welfare agency in the country to submit a statewide prevention plan pursuant to the federal Family First Prevention Services Act. The Agency plans to use 13 evidence-based practices to keep more children from coming into foster care. We congratulate the Agency's leadership including Director Brenda Donald, Ms. Natalie Craver, and Deputy Director Robert Matthews for making CFSA the first state agency to have a Children's Bureau approved prevention plan and for strategically obtaining an extension for its Title IV-E Waiver funding so that it could maintain existing prevention services.

Since last February, when we voiced our concern about the lack of transparency of CFSA's Family First planning process, the Agency has been far more open to input and feedback from advocates and community members. We have found CFSA to be more inclusive and candid regarding its Family First Act Services implementation and evaluation plans, although we have heard that the Agency has not been very open about its kinship navigator program plans.

The Agency's plan for primary prevention, i.e., Families First DC, also focuses on community engagement. In FY19, CFSA chose nine nonprofits in Wards 7 and 8, to

operate 10 DC Success Centers. The Centers will work with Community Advisory Councils, comprised of neighborhood leaders, to identify services that will be beneficial to their community and provide referrals to services. We are hopeful that the DC Success Centers will generate demonstrable positive outcomes for Ward 7 and 8, and we have been very impressed with the transparent and thoughtful way in which the Agency is planning to evaluate the programs.

CFSA's creation of an in-house mental health provider unit and its support for the Close Relative Caregiver's Subsidy Pilot are two good examples of the Agency's responsiveness to needs expressed by community members and advocates. In an effort to address a critical barrier to children's wellbeing, CFSA hired in-house mental health providers who provided individual therapy for 73 children in foster care during FY19. Given the ongoing challenge of timely connecting youth in care to quality mental health services, this is an important way to address a critical need. In just five months, the Close Relative Caregiver Pilot program is serving 12 caregivers, and 22 children are benefiting from this expanded support.

#### *New and Ongoing Concerns*

Unfortunately, despite this programmatic progress, CFSA failed to improve in a few areas that are absolutely essential to the wellbeing of children in foster care. The objective data undeniably demonstrates what we have observed representing children, kin and foster parents: CFSA does not have enough foster parents able, willing, and

properly supported to successfully meet the range of needs of the children coming into care.

In her December 2019 letter to District Court Judge Hogan, who oversees CFSA's progress in the *LaShawn v. Bowser* class action, Ms. Judy Meltzer, the Court Monitor and then Executive Vice President of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, acknowledged that CFSA's placement challenges have continued. Specifically, she wrote that "children have continued to stay overnight in the CFSA office building while stable placements are identified, and placement instability has increased for one cohort of children (children in care less than 12 months)."<sup>2</sup> In order to complete the Exit and Sustainability Plan (ESP) and thereby exit *LaShawn*, CFSA cannot have any children stay overnight in the Agency. However, from April 2019 to November 2019, "31 unique children experienced 60 overnight night stays at the Agency."<sup>3</sup> This data is troubling because (1) they show an increase in the number of children who stayed overnight at the Agency compared to 2018;<sup>4</sup> and (2) the data supports the conclusion that CFSA has yet to solve its placement crisis.

Children spending a night or two at CFSA is just one problem caused by the placement crisis. Children in CFSA's care are also experiencing a significant amount of placement instability. In FY19, approximately 22% (n=176) of the 796 youth in CFSA's care experienced three or more placements. This data point was nearly identical last year.<sup>5</sup> For years, we have shared with this committee the research about the traumatic

impact that placement disruptions can have on youth in care. It is not uncommon for youth in care to experience significant behavioral and emotional health decline when they must move to a new foster parent. When foster children are bounced from foster home to foster home, they struggle to form healthy attachments to adults,<sup>6</sup> which in turn makes it harder for them to be open to the prospect of reunifying with their parents or being adopted by their foster parents. For the sake of the permanency and wellbeing of the children in its care, CFSA must improve placement stability.

Lastly, Children's Law Center is extremely troubled by the data on the mental health of middle school aged children. In FY19, 118 children in CFSA's care experienced at least one episodes of psychiatric hospitalization.<sup>7</sup> This is a dramatic increase from the 15 children who experienced at least one episode of psychiatric hospitalization in FY18. Fifty of the children who were psychiatric hospitalized in FY19 were between the ages of 11 and 14, almost half of the 108 children in CFSA's care in that age range. This dramatic increase warrants the Committee's attention. It would be beneficial for the committee to learn the reasons for and efficacy of hospitalizing these youth. We are particularly concerned because some of the children that we represent experienced concerning unsafe incidents occur while they were psychiatrically hospitalized. Most important, we urge the Committee to learn what plans CFSA has address this deeply disturbing trend.

## Conclusion

CFSA launched some important new programs this year. However, as my testimony and that of my colleague Aubrey Edwards-Luce illustrates, there was little improvement in several key areas and some significant and negative outcomes. The small population of youth in foster care gives the Agency an advantage as it focuses on meeting the individualized needs of DC's children. As we look forward to 2021, we ask the committee to ensure that CFSA has the resources it needs to address the placement crisis and improve on core outcomes necessary to truly give our children the safety and stability they need. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Law Center fights so every child in DC can grow up with a loving family, good health and a quality education. Judges, pediatricians and families turn to us to advocate for children who are abused or neglected, who aren't learning in school, or who have health problems that can't be solved by medicine alone. With more than 100 staff and hundreds of pro bono lawyers, we reach 1 out of every 9 children in DC's poorest neighborhoods – more than 5,000 children and families each year. And, we multiply this impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit all children.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Judith Meltzer, Current President, Court Appointed Monitor, *La Shawn A. v. Bowser*, to The Honorable Thomas F. Hogan, (Dec. 10, 2019), Regarding *LaShawn A. v. Bowser*, Civil Action No. 89-1754 (TFH) Current Placement Data and Placement Commitment Updates.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> In 2018 between January and June, 10 children stayed overnight in the agency, which indicates an increase in FY19. See Center for Study of Social Policy, *Lashawn A. v. Bowser Progress Report for The Period July 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019*. Table One, Available at: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/LaShawn-A-v.-Bowser-Progress-Report-for-Period-July-2018-March-2019.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> In FY18, approximately 22% (n=189) of the 839 youth in CFSA's care experienced three or more placement episodes. See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q80a. Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> B. Troutman, et al., (ND). *The Effects of Foster Care Placement on Young Children's Mental Health*. University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Available at: [https://www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/icmh/archives/reports/Foster\\_Care.pdf](https://www.healthcare.uiowa.edu/icmh/archives/reports/Foster_Care.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q31e. Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.



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Testimony Before the District of Columbia Council  
Committee on Human Services  
February 12, 2020

Public Hearing:  
Performance Oversight Hearing  
Child and Family Services Agency

Aubrey Edwards-Luce  
Senior Policy Attorney  
Children's Law Center

## **Introduction**

Good morning Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Aubrey Edwards-Luce. I am a Senior Policy Attorney at Children's Law Center<sup>1</sup>. I am testifying today on behalf of Children's Law Center, which fights so every DC child can grow up with a loving family, good health and a quality education. With nearly 100 staff and hundreds of pro bono lawyers, Children's Law Center reaches 1 out of every 9 children in DC's poorest neighborhoods – more than 5,000 children and families each year. As institutional advocates for children and youth who have come into contact with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), we are committed to closely examining CFSA's performance and reporting on the state of child welfare in the District.

## **The State of Child Welfare**

Each year, the Committee on Human Services submits questions to CFSA to answer in advance of the Agency's performance oversight hearing. As a policy attorney, it is my job to review CFSA's responses and to look for trends, changes, and explanations that are relevant to the experiences of our clients and the Children's Law Center's Guardian *ad Litem* (GAL) attorneys, social workers, and investigators that support their child abuse and neglect cases. While our executive director, Judith Sandalow, provided an overview of some of the important progress and struggles that CFSA experienced during fiscal year 2019 (FY19), my testimony will discuss other

issues raised by CFSA's oversight answers. Each outcome is a set of data points, each data point is a child's experience, and each child's experience with our child welfare agency impacts how they recover from the trauma that they have faced and how they succeed as members of our community.

## **Positive Outcomes**

Judith commented on several positive outputs that CFSA generated in FY19.

While I will focus primarily on CFSA's outcomes, I would be remiss not to mention a few other positive outputs. In FY19, CFSA:

- Launched the CFSA Data Dashboard,<sup>2</sup> which provides the public access to Agency data;
- Produced two videos for children and youth about entering foster care;<sup>3</sup>
- Contracted with Children's Choice for 36 foster homes for youth with intensive needs;<sup>4</sup>
- Received a 3-year grant from Youth Villages to implement the YV LifeSet Program;<sup>5</sup> and
- Met three of its five placement array commitments pursuant to the *LaShawn* Exit and Sustainability Plan. <sup>6</sup>

Examining CFSA's outcomes provides the clearest picture of the CFSA's impact on the children in its care and on whether its strategies are working..

We consider it a positive outcome that the Agency has been able to detect an increased number of youth in its care that are being or that are at risk of being sex trafficked.<sup>7</sup> In FY18, CFSA identified seven children in their care that were being sex



trafficked or were at risk of being sex trafficked<sup>8</sup> and identified 11 youth who are being sex trafficked or who are at risk of being sex trafficked,<sup>9</sup> In the future we urge CFSA to collect and share data that reflects the impact that it's actions are having on these youth. Specifically, it would be helpful to see employment, mental health, placement and permanency outcomes for these young people so that we can better understand the experiences of youth in care who have been or who are at risk of being commercially and sexually exploited.

### **Ongoing Problems**

In past oversight hearings, we have shared our clients' experiences in order to make clear the real life impact on children that is represented by the poor outcomes that CFSA has consistently generated in the areas of placement, education, employment, and housing. This year, however, the numbers really speak for themselves and show that our clients' experiences are not unique.

As it relates to placement, CFSA had a 238% increase in the number of children who stayed overnight in the Agency. Thirteen children stayed overnight in the CFSA building during FY18 and 31 children stayed overnight at the Agency in FY19.<sup>10</sup> Children only stay overnight in the Agency when there is no foster family or other emergency placement available. But, this is not the only data which shows that CFSA has an inadequate number and array of foster families. The Agency also utilizes Sasha Bruce shelter and emergency respite to shelter youth who are awaiting a long term

placement.<sup>11</sup> In FY19, 100 youth (i.e. approximately one in every 8 children) in CFSA's care stayed in an emergency shelter or respite home.<sup>12</sup> CFSA also places children in the Sasha Bruce shelter while they are waiting for long-term placements. In FY18, 20 CFSA youth stayed at the Sasha Bruce shelter.<sup>13</sup> That number increased by 245% in FY19, to 49 youth.<sup>14</sup> Taken together, the increase of children staying at CFSA overnight and the increase in the number of children who stay in emergency placement indicate that the Agency continues to struggle to obtain or identify appropriate long-term placements for the children in its care.

The outcomes related to education and employment suggest that kids in care need considerably more support. The high school graduation rate decreased from 67% in FY18<sup>15</sup> to 56% in FY19.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, CFSA only has access for grade point averages for 84 of the 186 high school aged children in its care.<sup>17</sup> It is disturbing that the grade point average for those high school students in DC Public Schools and Prince George's County Public Schools is 1.69.<sup>18</sup> We hope that once CFSA acquires access to the other 102 students' data, that the Agency will use an equity lens while processing the data in order to identify the causes of this poor performance and to fashion an effective solution.<sup>19</sup>

High school and college dropout rates also indicate that students have unmet needs. Nearly 10% of high school students who were in CFSA care dropped out in FY19.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, approximately 50% (n=19) of the 40 young people in foster care

who enrolled in college in FY19 dropped out.<sup>21</sup> Half of the youth who dropped out of college reportedly left college because of employment. This leads us to question how the financial support of CFSA compares to the room and board and cost of living for foster youth who are in college.

Regarding employment, the data shows that youth in care are acquiring limited workplace experience. Of the 141 youth between the ages of 18 and 21, 41 (approximately 29%) were not employed or advancing their education.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, we are concerned about the youth's ability to gain workplace skills and maintain employment because less than half of the young people enrolled in vocational programs completed the programs.<sup>23</sup> Because so few youth complete their programs, it is not surprising that the number of youth who were unemployed when they aged out of foster care increased between FY18 and FY19.<sup>24</sup>

We have grave concerns about lack of housing stability for youth . Although In FY18, the Agency reported that only four of 53 youth who aged out exited to unstable living arrangements.<sup>25</sup> However, we continue to believe that the Agency improperly identifies transitional housing, college dorms, staying with friends, and DDS placements as "stable living arrangements." Also, the Agency reported that two youth aged out to DC's adult and family homelessness system, thereby requiring a referral to Virginia Williams in FY19.<sup>26</sup>

## **New Problems**

CFSA's prehearing responses also exposed new areas of concern that we hope the committee will further explore. First, the responses revealed a huge increase in the number of youth who were psychiatrically hospitalized: from 15 unique youth in FY18 to 118 unique youth in FY19. That means nearly 1 in 7 of the children in CFSA's care have been psychiatrically hospitalized. A closer look at the ages of the youth who have been psychiatrically hospitalized shows that about half of all the middle school aged youth in CFSA's care have been psychiatrically hospitalized. This finding is troubling because it involves a very high number of youth (especially of middle school aged youth) and because it involves a very intensive, but not very specific type of intervention. We hope the Committee will inquire further into the reasons for hospitalization and the experience of the youth during these hospitalizations. In response to a Committee question requesting solutions to youth staying overnight in the Agency, CFSA identifies a need for "mental health resources such as sub-acute psychiatric beds and partial hospitalization programs."<sup>27</sup> We think this proposal is worth further exploration in the context of lowering rate of psychiatric hospitalization.

In its discussion about changes in the Office of Youth Empowerment's Career Pathways' Program, CFSA reports that it has terminated the Career Pathways program and initiated the YV LifeSet program.<sup>28</sup> Even in its sunset year, Career Pathways served 113 youth while Youth Villages served 37 during FY19. It is unclear whether the YV LifeSet program will build up its capacity such that it could serve all of the youth in

care between the ages of 17 and 21 (n= 187). We hope the Committee will inquire about CFSA's plans to increase capacity or to otherwise serve the remaining children in this age group.

One of CFSA's most important duties is to ensure that all children safely and permanently exit its care and supervision, because prolonged stays in foster care are harmful to children. Therefore, data concerning permanency outcomes are very important. According to the Agency's oversight responses, there has been a four month increase in the time it takes to finalize an adoption after the petitioner has filed her petition. In FY18, it took 10 months on average to finalize an adoption.<sup>29</sup> Whereas in FY19, it took 14 months on average.<sup>30</sup> This four month delay means that children are having to manage the uncertainty of their futures for four additional months, thereby causing an increase in their stress level.

### **Child Safety and Well-Being Ombudsperson: One Way to Do Better**

As CFSA looks for ways to address these concerns and improve negative outcomes, we strongly recommend the Council and the agency work together to move forward with establishing an independent Ombudsperson focused on child safety and well-being. Although CFSA doesn't need to be the sole focus of the proposed office, we believe an independent Ombudsperson is a critical resource for children, families, kin, foster parents, child advocates, the Council, and CFSA itself as we all work together to improve outcomes for DC's most vulnerable children.

CFSA's mission is not easy or straight-forward. Many of the problems CFSA is struggling with – the lack of adequate mental health services, the lack of appropriate placements and paths forward for older youth, poor education outcomes – are the same problems child welfare agencies across the country are facing. But CFSA has one big advantage – it has a very small number of children in care and thus can focus on individualized plans and supports for each child.

An Ombudsperson can help CFSA improve outcomes in two ways. First, an Ombudsperson would give youth, families, and CFSA a neutral forum to informally work through and resolve case-level issues quickly. Using creativity and alternative dispute resolution skills, an Ombudsperson can address the unique circumstances of each case and find workable solutions, without the burdens associated with taking case-level conflicts to court or even through the chain of command at CFSA. Second, an Ombudsperson would have the investigative capacity to consider macro-level data and analyze systemic issues affecting the functioning of the Agency. Through this function, an Ombudsperson would provide increased transparency and accountability for CFSA, which would in turn lessen reliance on the court monitor established by *LaShawn A. v. Bowser*.<sup>31</sup> By serving in these dual roles, an Ombudsperson can support CFSA's efforts to resolve the complex problems it faces and improve outcomes for children in CFSA's care.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Law Center fights so every child in DC can grow up with a loving family, good health and a quality education. Judges, pediatricians and families turn to us to advocate for children who are abused or neglected, who aren't learning in school, or who have health problems that can't be solved by medicine alone. With nearly 100 staff and hundreds of pro bono lawyers, we reach 1 out of every 9 children in DC's poorest neighborhoods – more than 5,000 children and families each year. And, we multiply this impact by advocating for city-wide solutions that benefit all children.

<sup>2</sup> CFSA Public Dashboard, *Available at:* <https://cfsadashboard.dc.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> DC Child and Family Services Agency, *CFSA Videos for Children and Families Entering Foster Care*, YOUTUBE (Feb. 12, 2020), [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXk\\_g2mnCvB7\\_yuX8lUv4wjVJ\\_Z2CAR6q](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXk_g2mnCvB7_yuX8lUv4wjVJ_Z2CAR6q).

<sup>4</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q97(l). *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q131(a). *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Judith Meltzer, Executive Vice President, Court Appointed Monitor, *La Shawn A. v. Bowser*, to The Honorable Thomas F. Hogan, (Dec. 10, 2019), Regarding *LaShawn A. v. Bowser*, Civil Action No. 89-1754 (TFH) Current Placement Data and Placement Commitment Updates.

<sup>7</sup> While increased identification is a positive outcome, we are concerned that the oversight responses indicated that the number of sex trafficking referrals that CFSA received from the Metropolitan Police Department is down from 27 in FY18 to 14 in FY19. *Compare* Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q39(b). *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>, with Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q39(b). *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q41. *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Compare* Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q87. *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>, with Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q100. *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> CFAs utilizes both emergency placements and respite placements.

<sup>12</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q101. *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q89(a). *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q102(a). *Available at:* <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.

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- <sup>15</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q68(c). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>.
- <sup>16</sup> Reports 73%, but by calculation (18/32) only 56% of seniors graduated. See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q130(b). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>17</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q130(e). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>18</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>19</sup> We recommend that CFSA is examine the whole data set by gender, ability, and placement.
- <sup>20</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q130(a),(f). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>21</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q128(c). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>22</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q136(a), (b). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>23</sup> 8 out of 18 completed their vocation programs. See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q131(b),(d). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>24</sup> Compare Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q77(b). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>, with Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q138(b). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>25</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q138(c). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>26</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q138(e). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>27</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q100. Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>28</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q131(a). Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>29</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2018 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q97. Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/cfsa19.pdf>.
- <sup>30</sup> See Children and Families Service Agency, *FY2019 Performance Oversight Responses*, response to Q113. Available at: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>.
- <sup>31</sup> *LaShawn A. v. Kelly*, 1994 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 20872 (D. D.C. 1994).



**Ruqiyyah Anbar-Shaheen**

**Director of Early Childhood, DC Action for Children**

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

**FY 2019 Oversight Hearing - Child and Family Services Agency - Feb. 12, 2020**

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Good morning, Councilmember Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Council as it reviews the performance of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) in Fiscal Year 2019. My name is Ruqiyyah Anbar-Shaheen, and I am Director of Early Childhood at DC Action for Children (DC Action).

DC Action provides data analysis and policy leadership on critical issues facing DC children and youth. We envision a District of Columbia where all children, regardless of their race/ethnicity, family's income or zip code, have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We are also the home of DC KIDS COUNT, an online resource that tracks key indicators of child well-being in the District.

DC Action is also a member of Under 3 DC, a new grassroots coalition of parents, early childhood education providers, educators, researchers, health and parahealth professionals, and community-based organizations and advocates committed to connecting the dots for DC's littlest residents. We know strengthening early childhood systems are critical to the District's future, and key to addressing DC's racial inequities in education, health, and economic security in particular.

DC Action also Chairs the Home Visiting Council, serving with other advocates, community-based providers and agency leaders. This council works to strengthen home visiting in the District by building a cross-sector network of support for programs, advocating for resources and funding for their stability and growth, and collaborating to address system-wide challenges to the implementation of home visiting services.

We appreciate Director Brenda Donald's leadership and CFSA's commitment to strengthening families and investment in home visiting as a strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. Under her direction, CFSA developed an approach to strengthening and stabilizing families so that children can remain safely at home (when possible and appropriate); and this approach extends far beyond the requirements of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act. We look forward to the implementation of Families First DC and to supporting the continuous quality improvement work of the initiative.

Home visiting is an essential strategy within the early childhood system that works to strengthen families and ensure children have the foundation they need for future success. During FY20, CFSA is one of two local government agencies funding home visiting programs. We believe CFSA's investment in home visiting supports larger efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect by implementing a proven family support strategy for families with a vulnerable population of children. During FY20, young children ages 3 and under accounted for more than one-third of removals.[1] Understanding the needs of infants and toddlers can be challenging, and while it can be exciting for many, this time period can also be difficult and overwhelming for some parents. Home visitors provide valuable education, support and coaching to

parents on parent-child attachment, brain development, health and nutrition, and early learning, and the evidence-based programs implemented by CFSA have been proven to contribute to reductions in child abuse and neglect.

CFSA's partnership and leadership on the Home Visiting Council played a critical role in developing a DC-specific definition of home visiting, meant to clarify what home visiting is and is not. This definition is attached to my testimony and will be published in the forthcoming 2019 Annual Report of the Home Visiting Council.

Beyond the HV Council, we have also been pleased to see CFSA actively pursue thoughtful partnerships with its sister agencies in developing its Family First Prevention Services Act Prevention Plan- these partnerships are essential to a child and family centered system able to accommodate the wide diversity of needs of the District's children and their families. Among these partnerships is with the Department of Health, with whom CFSA has executed an MOU to support direct referrals from the agency into DC Health's home visiting programs. Additionally, CFSA is funding 40 additional Parents as Teachers slots specifically to meet the needs of Family First Prevention-eligible children and their families. These agency partnerships are important, and they accompany critical community partnerships that we hope to see deepen and become more inclusive as the agency continues its work.

CFSA plays an important role in supporting DC children, youth and their families. We acknowledge and support CFSA's emphasis on prevention and their commitment to keeping families together, whenever possible. We recognize that changes in the federal landscape and the end of the Title IV-E waiver have resulted in changes that require CFSA to make difficult decisions regarding investments and take thoughtful and deliberate action to ensure that the most efficient and effective programs continue to receive funding.

In December of 2018, this committee held a roundtable on home visiting to hear the concerns of providers and advocates about the potential loss of some home visiting services due to these changes. During that hearing, parents, advocates, and providers shared the importance of the home visiting services that CFSA funded. These testimonies affirmed the positive impact of these unique and innovative programs on the lives of families of young children. In response, this committee allocated a small amount of funding for these programs to continue. This one-time funding has allowed programs that were unable to avoid closing out after funding ended to hire new staff and resume services, while others were able to make ends meet in the interim. As CFSA evaluates the programs it funds, we hope it will consider how it can support and strengthen these programs to continue to serve the communities that they have benefited, beyond this fiscal year. As always, the DC Home Visiting Council would be glad to support such planning efforts.

In closing, we see CFSA's efforts to support children and keep them safe as mission critical. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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[1] Children under age 3 amounted to 25 out of 67 removals. Data found: Child & Family Services Agency. (2020). FY19-20 Performance Oversight Responses: Question 15. Retrieved from: <https://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/cfsa20.pdf>

**DC Home Visiting Council  
Defining Home Visiting for DC**

**Definition**

Home visiting is a service delivery strategy that serves as a prevention and early intervention support for expecting parents and families of young children from before birth until kindergarten entry. In these voluntary programs, trained home visitors<sup>1</sup> and participants regularly meet in the home or another comfortable setting designated by the family. A key characteristic of these programs is that each implements a model for addressing specific maternal, family, and child outcomes through education, counseling, support, and other services. Home visitors also provide families with connections to community-based services and resources that are responsive to their goals.

Home visiting programs must meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Visits are home-based, meaning that more than half of the visits should be at home or in another setting designated by the family, according to model design.
- Home visits occur according to a program model and/or curriculum, with flexibility to address the goals and needs of participants.
- The age range of children in participant families falls in the prenatal period up to approximately kindergarten entry, although not all programs serve the entire age range.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Models must target improvement in one or more of the following areas:
  - Child and family safety
  - Pregnancy outcomes
  - Timing of subsequent births
  - Maternal or child health
  - Parenting skills and practices
  - School readiness
  - Social, emotional, and cognitive development of children
  - Parental education, employment, and other parental factors linked to child development

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<sup>1</sup> Home visitors can have a variety of qualifications and backgrounds, depending on the program they are implementing. These can include nursing, social work, mental health, or parent education. All home visitors should be trained and prepared to work with a variety of families, including different cultures, ethnicities, languages, family configurations, sexual orientations, disability statuses, economic situations, etc.

### **Other in-home visits and services**

Providers may employ a variety of in-home strategies to support client wellness and autonomy. However, home visiting programs are distinct from other in-home visits and services in that they must meet **ALL** of the above criteria. In-home services *that do not fit this description* include:

- Programs with one, few or infrequent home visits
- Home visits based on professional judgment or medical referrals that are infrequent and supplemental to a treatment plan
- Programs in which home visiting is supplemental to other services, such as child protective services or P-12 education (public school teacher visits)
- Programs that target populations or outcomes other than those designated above
- Involuntary home visits, such as those that are court-ordered or punitive

Testimony of  
**Kristina Fleming**  
Young Professional

**Child and Family Services Agency**  
**Performance Oversight Hearing FY 19/20 (First Quarter)**

**COUNCILMEMBER BRIANNE K. NADEAU, CHAIRPERSON**  
**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 11 a.m.**  
**Room 123, John A. Wilson Building**  
**1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.**  
**Washington, D.C. 20004**

Good Morning, Chairman Nadeau and members of the District Council Committee on Human Services. Thank you for taking time this morning to listen to my story and recommendations.

My name is Kristina Fleming, I am 21 years old. I came into foster care at 16 years old, with a 1 yr. old daughter whose name is Key'monie. Being a young mom and not having a support system was rough. Coming into foster care saved both my life, as well as my daughter's life. Being in care enabled me to acquire the resources and life skills necessary to properly provide for Key'monie.

One of the most pivotal moments in foster care was attending ***Adoption Day***. The most memorable thing about ***Adoption Day*** was singing in front of the crowd, and being able to see adoptions become final. That inspired me and instilled hope where it was once lost.

I emancipated out of foster care on April 2019. Prior to emancipation I lived in The Mary Elizabeth House in Northeast, Washington DC the majority of my stay in care. At the age of 18 years old I had a stroke. CFSA was my biggest support through therapy, learning how to walk again, as well as raising my daughter. While in care I received my high school diploma in 2018. I also received job readiness training which helped me obtain employment at places such as Bed Bath and Beyond and Starbucks. Being connected to OYE also helped me pursue my vocational endeavors which included earning my OSHA 10 certification and attending UDCC's Phlebotomy program 10/29/18.

During my time in care I have received several awards for my perseverance, hard work, and determination. Some of the awards I achieved included the, Career ***Pathway Achiever*** and the ***Right Direction Award*** from the attorney general Karl Racine. My experience in foster care taught me strength, courage, and resilience. If I could offer any advice, I would tell youth to give

social workers, foster parents, or any supports that are offered a chance. Take advantage of every opportunity and resource offered. Everyone does not have the intentions of hurting you. Some people like the case managers I worked with at CFSA are here to ensure your well-being, and nurture your growth.

In conclusion I would like to thank my team and CFSA for supporting me even when I felt like there was nothing to support. I learned to believe in myself because CFSA supports believed in me. I have one recommendation. I would like to recommend that social workers as well as foster parents have extensive training in dealing with youth and teens with mental health illnesses and/or disabilities. Thank you again for allowing me to share my story and recommendation.



Testimony of  
**Makiah Harris**  
Young Professional

**Child and Family Services Agency**  
**Performance Oversight Hearing FY 19/20 (First Quarter)**

**COUNCILMEMBER BRIANNE K. NADEAU, CHAIRPERSON**  
**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 11 a.m.**  
**Room 123, John A. Wilson Building**  
**1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.**  
**Washington, D.C. 20004**

Good Morning, Chairman Nadeau and members of the District Council Committee on Human Services. Thank you for taking time this morning to listen to my story and recommendations. My name is Makiah Harris, and I am 18 years old. I came into foster care at the age of 17 and it was kind of hard for me to leave my home and family. I did not know what was going to happen to me and my daughter.

During the past few months, I've been placed in three different homes. Some may be nothing like you expect, but some of them might be best for you. I honestly thought I'll never find a good foster home for me and my daughter. I knew don't nobody want a young teenage girl with a nasty attitude.

My social worker Sierra Roach helped me and my daughter. She would talk and encourage me and we have a good bond. She is like a big sister. Tells me what's right and wrong and I always listen. Ms. Sierra makes sure me and my daughter have clothes and stuff. She makes me strong and takes me my appointments. She also found my placement where I live now.

My new foster parent Ms. Tymie didn't judge me and I got a different vibe from her. She was on my page and we can get along. She didn't ask too many questions but she makes sure I'm straight. Before I had my child, I felt like I could trust this placement and it was safe for me and my daughter to live. I feel really good in this home and I am happy Ms. Sierra picked it.

I have also worked with OYE and they have been helpful with school. When I tell my foster parent about school issues we call Dr. Divinity with OYE. She has called meetings at the school to make sure I can graduate this June. She and my social worker give me gift cards when I do good to encourage me. OYE also makes sure my baby has stuff, helped me with my savings account, senior fees, and help plan my future with me being a Fire Fighter or Nurse. My foster parent and OYE are also helping with my community hours so I can graduate.

Thank you again for allowing me to share my story. My experience helps me with a few suggestions I wish were different with the agency. I feel we should be able to meet the foster parent before moving into their home. After meeting them at their home, asking questions, and seeing their living situation and how they may treat us. This may help if we want to stay there. We need more foster homes so we don't have to stay at CFSA until they find a home. I also feel foster parents should be trained to have teenagers in their home because some have been really controlling and will not let you do nothing.

Remember everything isn't bad until you give it a try.

Testimony of  
**Kiana Harrison**  
Young Professional

**Child and Family Services Agency**  
**Performance Oversight Hearing FY 19/20 (First Quarter)**

**COUNCILMEMBER BRIANNE K. NADEAU, CHAIRPERSON**  
**COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 11 a.m.**  
**Room 123, John A. Wilson Building**  
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**Washington, D.C. 20004**

I am Kiana Harrison and this is my story. Before I was in foster care, I was on my own for three years. I was taking care of myself, and attending school. It was a difficult time between 13 and 16 because I did not know who to trust, and negative influences were all around me. My Mom loved me, but she did not know how to care for me. I used to cry all the time. I used to care about feeling forgotten. Now I know that I am not going to let anyone dictate the way I live and dream for the future.

It was really hard because when you are on your own for so long, people start telling you that you aren't worth much, they try and diminish you, saying that "you aren't cut out for school," and "you aren't going to make it." I am determined to prove everyone wrong that doubted me, because I do not want to be who everyone said I would be, I do not want to fail. I am me, and I believe in myself because I'm no dummy. I want to be successful. Every day I try and put a smile on everyone's face despite the challenges in my life, I want to spread happiness, even in the darkest places.

School seemed like a happy place at one time because that was my only refuge and the outside world seemed dark. Now that I have more supports in my life, it is not as scary. My first experience in foster care was weird because it was different. My first home was nice, it felt like a weight got lifted off of my shoulders. It became home to me. I left that home because she didn't have room for me when her son was coming back home. I then lived in a respite home, it was okay, I would sleep there but I never wanted to be there because it felt far away from the area I was used to. I have been in my current foster home for 4 months.

My social worker obviously cares about me and I know that she would never put me in harms way. I trust her. I just don't want to be moving around everywhere. I'm okay. If I could be in one spot for a while and get to know someone, that would be best.

Foster care has helped me because it got me in a place that I want to be. I am in a warm bed at night and I have food to eat. My foster parent and OYE team encourage me to go to school. I have also been connected to LifeSet and I meet with a Specialist once a week, working on my independent living goals. They do what my Mom and Dad should've done. It is not always going to be peaches and cream, but it is a start. I think that teenagers should give foster parents a try even when it seems weird or different to them. When I first met my current foster parent, I thought everything seemed weird and strange, but I am safe and she is actually a pretty nice lady. If I could change one thing about the foster care system, I would like to see foster parents being more relatable and understanding of the youth that come into their homes.

Dr. Cheryl Anne Boyce  
MACCAN  
February 12, 2020  
Testimony

On behalf of The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (MACCAN), I am pleased to comment on the tireless work of DC's Child Family and Services Agency to benefit the citizens of the city. MACCAN serves as a collaborative, advisory body for all activities of child abuse and neglect in DC, including commissioned members of the highest standing who are appointed by the Mayor and who represent governmental agencies, community agencies, and the public. Together the members of MACCAN work on cross-cutting and collaborative issues to increase opportunities for partnership to reduce and prevent child abuse and neglect and its negative outcomes.

**Adoption and Safe Families.** The committee supports the use of innovative tools such as the "Exit to Permanence Roadmap" to support effective case planning. We encourage ongoing efforts to ensure quality control and fidelity for these tools for maximum effectiveness. We support resources for companion tools to allow families, resource parents, and partnering organizations (e.g., Community-based Collaboratives) focused on family strengths and family supports. All stakeholders can benefit from roadmap resources linked in one portal to achieve permanency promptly for children and families. Accessible tools and resources in various media platforms guided by a roadmap framework benefit all stakeholders including parents, foster parents, and organizations. The resources needed for accessible, connected data platforms remains a need.

In 2019, CFSA moved to a Permanency FTM that was less formal and cumbersome and at the discretion of the social worker. The Parent Engagement, Education, and Resource (PEER) Support is an exemplary program providing community-based peer support using parents who successfully prevented the removal of their children for reunification. We support efforts to evaluate successful programs such as PEER to increase participation expansion. Similarly, youth who transition Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), need a range of successful approaches. The organizations and stakeholders, such as schools and community-based settings, need a roadmap and resources to assist youth in transition to their permanency. We support resources across agencies that are age-appropriate, interesting, and accessible to youth available to assist overtime for strengthening long-term outcomes of youth in care and provide stable environments.

**Services for Children and Families.** MACCAN recommends evidence-based interventions and services for families. CFSA offers a variety of services to meet the needs of children and families. Through the Safe and Stable Families initiative, families get tailored services (formal and informal) along with interventions. Programs including co-locating Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) clinicians at the Collaborative sites to improve accessibility for families was reported. Housing and family treatment court are also available. Worthy of note, over 300 families received services from the Community Partnership/Mayor's Services Liaison Office (MSLO) accessibly located at the Moultrie Courthouse. MSLO promotes safe and permanent homes for children by working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop culturally sensitive, family-focused, and strength-based care. A representative from MSLO has proudly served as a contributing member of MACCAN for several years. Notably, the direct provision of mental health services through CFSA for timely initial assessment and treatment began in FY 2019. We look forward to future updates on the program outcomes, including the time to permanency and individual educational and behavioral outcomes. This innovative program change addresses concerns raised about the delay in mental health services. Resources for mental health and substance abuse prevention treatment are an area of proposed growth for CFSA.

**Family First Prevention Services Act Plan.** The Family First Prevent Services Act Plan is a continuation of the Title IV-E Waiver demonstration project, which provided federal funding for enhanced services and supports to children and families at various levels of involvement with the child welfare system to keep more children and youth safely and stably in their homes (as opposed to entering foster care), and achieving timely permanence for a greater number children removed from their homes for safety concerns. Families may come through portal of the 1) *Front Porch* (may have engaged with CFSA, but have safely remained or reunified with family) or 2) *Front Door* (open case with CFSA). CFSA has identified an array of existing evidence-based programs in the domains of in-home parent skill-based programs, mental health, and substance abuse prevention and treatment and services, selected specifically to meet the needs of Family First prevention-eligible children and their caregiver. Resources for prevention that are evidence-based need implementation with fidelity and sustainability and

quality controls. MACCAN strongly supports ongoing efforts for resources to ensure evidence-based models in practice.

**Strong Collaborations and Teams.** The five neighborhood Collaboratives which are a part of the broader child welfare system in DC are important resources for our community. Two of the representatives of the Collaboratives serve as appointed members of MACCAN. The coordination between community resources and CFSA remains essential. Reunification, guardianship, and adoption protocols are promising processes to goal achievement and develop targeted interventions using case reviews by a team. MACCAN congratulates CFSA on the highest permanency rate this decade.

**Families First DC.** We applaud programs and support for the success of Families First DC, a neighborhood-based, neighborhood-driven approach aimed at reducing disparities and creating stronger, more resilient families through meaningful access to District services. CFSA provides grant funding to support the cost of planning for and implementation of community-driven, place-based initiatives focusing on multiple aspects of a family's life to improve well-being and stability.

These Family Success Center are in one or more of the ten communities identified as focus areas in Wards 7 and 8. Important indicators of social determinants of health data, violence prevention, substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect require a multi-agency support approach endorsed by MACCAN. An important part of the model is a Community Advisory Council, representative of the larger community, who will help inform the community engagement process, resources and services delivered, use of grant funds, and specific goals and outcomes. Services for families not yet involved with the child welfare system are important for child abuse and neglect prevention efforts and family strengthening. MACCAN supports the efforts of the Family Success Centers, which needs multiagency and collaborative support for successful outcomes in the community.

In conclusion, DCFSA works towards improvement with novel programming based on evidence. Efforts are exceptional and worthy of broad dissemination as a model of change, collaboration, and progress to serve children and families in care. Evidence-based models that show success upon implementation need ongoing community stakeholder input, support, and resource. MACCAN applauds CFSA for its diligent and hardworking efforts to prevent child



Dr. Cheryl Anne Boyce  
MACCAN  
February 12, 2020  
Testimony

abuse and neglect, and the negative effect on individuals, families, and communities. MACCAN proudly serves as a partner and a collaborator with CFSA, the community, multiple agency partners, council members, and the Office of the Mayor. Together we all can continue to work towards the safety and well-being of children and families in DC.

Good Morning, my name is Donte Massey, I am a relative caregiver and I live in Ward 8. I came to a hearing last year around this time. I shared my story about me getting custody of my younger brothers and sister. I didn't know what I was doing, I was scared, nervous, overwhelmed, and so much more. I was asking for help. Everyone told me there was nothing they could do for me and my family because I got custody and CFSA wasn't involved. I almost gave up, but when I came to the hearing and testified, the support I received from the Committee was overwhelming. I couldn't believe how much the Committee cared. For the Committee to start the Close Relative Caregiver Subsidy program was a blessing, that hasn't just helped me and my family in so many ways but families all over the District. Words can't express how grateful I am. Thank you...my family and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

I started receiving the Close Relative Caregiver Subsidy and working with the Kinship Navigator program at CFSA in November of 2019. From the short time I have been working with them, I wanted to share some of my experiences and suggestions for the future. I am so grateful for the Close Relative Caregiver subsidy. The Kinship Navigator Program referred me to the Far Southeast Collaborative for services. That experience has been good and bad. The good part is that the Collaborative is close to where I live and the caseworker is nice. The bad part is I feel like I am being monitored instead of helped. I was hoping that the Kinship Navigator and the Far Southeast Collaborative would provide support and knowledge of what to do with the children, like how to get them to open up to me more. The Collaborative signed me up for a parenting class but I felt like the

course was for parents who had their children taken away or had action taken against them by CFSA. The class made me feel like I was in trouble or like I had lost my sister and brothers instead of being able to share what was going on with me being a relative caregiver.

What I need is someone I can talk to about the problems I face taking care of my younger sister and brothers. I'm looking for something the kids can be involved in where they can meet other kids who are being raised by relative caregivers. I want stability with housing and employment. I am also having trouble with the Fort Davis ESA. They reduced my TANF benefits and cut off my SNAP entirely before reinstating my SNAP benefits just yesterday. I feel the CFSA Kinship Navigator would work better if they coordinated with all my caseworkers so everyone could be on the same page. I would like to be involved with the Kinship Navigator so I can give input on what works and what doesn't work.

Words can't express how grateful I am for the Close Relative Caregiver subsidy. My family and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you also for the opportunity to share my experiences with the CFSA Kinship Navigator program and the Far Southeast Collaborative and for listening to my suggestions for how they can serve relative caregivers better.



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**Testimony Before the Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on Human Services**

**Public Hearing:  
Performance Oversight Hearing  
Child and Family Services Agency  
February 12, 2020**

**Marla Spindel  
Executive Director, DC KinCare Alliance**

Good morning Chairperson Nadeau and Members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Marla Spindel, and I am the co-founder and Executive Director of DC KinCare Alliance. Our mission is to support the legal, financial, and related service needs of relative caregivers who step up to raise children in their extended families in times of crisis when the children's parents are not able to care for them due to mental health and substance use disorders, incarceration, death, abuse and neglect, and/or deportation. DC KinCare Alliance is a member of the Fair Budget Coalition, and we are pleased to report that the Coalition's FY 2021 Budget Platform requests \$600,000 for an independent Office of Ombudsperson for Child Safety and Well-Being.

When we testified at this hearing last year, we asked the Council to expand the Grandparent Caregivers Program to include other close relative caregivers. We thank the Council for passing the Close Relative Caregivers Subsidies Amendment Act of 2019 so that aunts, uncles, cousins and adult siblings who are taking care of DC's at-risk children can get the financial help they desperately need. The Grandparent and Close Relative Caregivers Programs together ensure the safety and stability of children at already traumatic times when they have to leave their parent's homes to live with a relative.

There is one additional thing we would respectfully ask the Council to do to ensure these Programs are fully achieving their purposes, and that is to remove the requirement that a caregiver is not eligible to apply for a subsidy until 6 months after a child has moved into their home. The six-month waiting period causes real hardship to relative caregivers and the children they raise. DC's relative caregivers are primarily women of color who live in Wards 7 and 8. They often live at the economic margins of our society, even before they are called upon to raise a relative child. Many report a significant disability. The children who come into their care arrive with nothing but the clothes on their back and the relative caregiver has

to scramble to buy food, clothing, shoes, toiletries, bedding and even a bed. The up-front costs of having a child come into their homes unexpectedly are great and our kinship caregivers do not have savings or other resources available to cover these costs. Often, they wind up falling further into poverty, with no money to pay for rent, food, heat, water, or electricity.<sup>1</sup>

We know that there are devastating impacts for children growing up in poverty.<sup>2</sup> Advancements in neuroscience have made it possible to demonstrate that poverty disrupts the developing brain architecture, which leads to significantly lower educational achievement, earnings, and overall health for those growing up in poverty, as well as a disproportionately higher rate of developmental delays and learning disabilities.<sup>3</sup> And, research has found that there is a “dose-response” pattern, such that outcomes are worse the longer children are exposed to poverty.<sup>4</sup> These studies posit that interventions aimed at increasing the income of families with children can alter the link between childhood poverty and deficits in cognition and academic achievement.

According to CFSA’s Grandparent Caregiver Program Annual Status Report for FY 2018, 66% of the recipients of the subsidy receive TANF, which means they live well below the poverty line. The annual average GCP subsidy together with TANF effectively brings a family at least up to the poverty line. But waiting to do this only serves to hurt children and increase their risk of both short-term and long-term deficits in all areas of development,

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<sup>1</sup> We testified at the Department of Human Services Oversight Hearing about obstacles for relative caregivers to obtain TANF and other benefits in DC.

<sup>2</sup> Toxic Stress Key Concepts,” Harvard University Center on the Developing Child.  
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>.

<sup>3</sup> Perry Firth, “Homelessness and Academic Achievement: The Impact of Childhood Stress on School Achievement,” Firesteel: The Network of Washington YWCAs Washington. (September 8, 2014).  
<http://firesteelwa.org/2014/09/homelessness-and-academic-achievement-the-impact-of-childhood-stress-on-school-performance/>

<sup>4</sup> Hair NL, Hanson JL, Wolfe BL, Pollak SD. Association of Child Poverty, Brain Development, and Academic Achievement. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2015;169(9):822–829. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.1475.  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2381542>.

including health, education, and well-being. Every minute, hour and day matters, and we should make sure every effort is made to bring these children out of poverty as soon as possible.

We also note that in addition to the 6-month waiting period, CFSA reports that there is an average processing time of 30 days for someone to be approved for the subsidy. Even once approved, the caregiver will not receive their first payment until the month after approval. Ultimately, this results in caregivers having to wait a minimum of **8 months** before receiving any payment. Moreover, the first payment is often only a partial payment, as the subsidy is paid in arrears. For example, if a relative caregiver were approved for a subsidy today, they would have to wait until March 7-11 for a payment to be issued, and it would only be an amount equal to the remaining 17 days in February – about half a month’s subsidy. They will have to wait until April 7-11 to receive a full month’s subsidy payment for the month of March.

Significantly, for those applying for the GCP subsidy, the wait time is indefinite as there has been a waiting list since August 2019. This is the first time CFSA has reported a waiting list for this subsidy, which we attribute to more children being diverted from foster care to live informally with relatives, along with more grandparents becoming aware of the Program as a result of our efforts to publicize it community-wide.

The Council has an opportunity to today to dispense with the 6-month waiting period that undermines the purposes of these Programs to ensure better outcomes for children when they cannot live with their parents. We also ask that the Council consider emergency funding now of the Grandparent Caregiver Program to eliminate the current waiting list, and increase funding for FY 2021 to ensure such a waiting list does not occur next year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.

Testimony before the Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on Human Services

February 12, 2020

Child and Family Services Agency Oversight Hearing  
Margie Chalofsky  
Executive Director  
Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC)



Good morning, Chairperson Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. I am Margie Chalofsky, the Executive Director of the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center, commonly known as FAPAC. I am also an adoptive parent of a 26-year old son adopted through CFSA over 20 years ago, and proud grandmother of his wonderful four-year old daughter.

### **What is FAPAC?**

FAPAC is an organization founded by foster parents in October 2000 to elevate their voices at tables of system reform. We were founded not as a membership organization, but as one open to all foster, kinship and adoptive families (commonly referred to as “resource” families) caring for DC’s children. As a tiny organization sometimes known as the “little engine that could,” FAPAC has grown significantly in scope in order to respond to evolving community need. An expansion of our scope beyond our founding purpose (and name) is our Families Growing Stronger Together (FGST) a comprehensive primary prevention parenting program that we host through a partnership with the Georgia Ave Family Support Collaborative and CFSA. Our current programs for resource parents include individual support, group/peer support, assistance in building shared parenting to strengthen relationships between foster parents and birth parents, and providing referrals to other community organizations and resources. All of our work with families informs our systemic advocacy, in which we work in a duality of advocacy and partnership with CFSA and other agencies to improve policies and practices impacting the children and families we serve.

### **CFSA Progress to Date**

Last year my testimony was largely about the relationship between the foster parent community and CFSA, and the need to improve problem-resolution processes. I testified about the fear of retaliation that foster families often feel when trying to raise issues up the chain. As an update this year, I am very glad to report that the Agency has been working diligently and with transparency to change this negative culture. Director Donald’s strong choices of new leadership in the Permanency Administration have opened doors to concrete steps that begin to “eat the elephant” one bite at a time. We are experiencing a promising new level of openness that makes these hard conversations possible, and we are having qualitatively improved experiences when needing to elevate things up the chain of command. We thank Director Donald and her management team for hearing these concerns and moving to work on them with commitment and honesty. Moreover, I would also like to acknowledge some key accomplishments that have happened since last year’s hearing that we see

as very beneficial to foster families. These include new training opportunities offered by CFSA's Child Welfare Training Academy (CWTA); the additional access for CFSA foster parents to participate in training at NCCF; the design of a new transition protocol when moving children from home to home; increased utilization of the CFSA website to provide important information to families; and better usage of the CFSA Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).

### **Key Issues**

I would like to emphasize a few areas that from our perspective need critical attention.

We find that CFSA has good people trying to do their best and often quality resources, yet oftentimes the delivery of these resources fail to help families to be stabilized and supported in ways that really work. **We would like to present three problematic areas that we believe if resolved could make significant impact on strengthening placements.**

- (1) **Foster parents have pleaded for on-call and *timely* crisis support that can help them to de-escalate situations and respond to trauma induced behaviors that are outside of their skill and experience.** We continue to hear from families who report being unsuccessful when they try to access crisis intervention. Currently, CFSA contracts stabilization/crisis intervention services through a program known as Mobile Stabilization Service (MSS). Additionally, the Department of Behavioral Health contracts for an intervention service known as ChAMPS. It is not uncommon to hear from families that they are passed from one service to another without getting help. Out of desperation in violent or destructive situations, some families will then feel their only option is to call the police. This is certainly not a "trauma-informed" solution. Instead of saying to families "we are here to help you," this tells families they are on their own in emergencies, a message that frightens people from taking placements of older children and/or those with higher levels of trauma.
- (2) **Foster parents need on-going clinical support.** Most of the social work role is case management, leaving families without clinical knowledge working through the children's issues of trauma on their own. Coupled with often inadequate therapy services, this too is a recipe for instability. Additionally, foster parents who step forward to help and feel they cannot succeed will often quit, adding to the placement insufficiency we currently are experiencing.

- (3) **To recruit and retain the highest quality foster parents to give our children the best we can give, the Agency needs to institutionalize ways to emphasize the value of the foster parent role and to ensure workers are giving families what they need to be successful.** Until we put into place accountability measures, we will always find ourselves recruiting into a leaky bucket, creating a vicious cycle of continually having to license large numbers of new and inexperienced foster parents while many high-quality parents the Agency has already invested in walk out the door. We have been advocating for the Agency to add foster parent evaluations of workers to social worker job performance measures and we hope this will move forward. The saying goes “what is measured gets done.” Including this perspective in performance evaluations would offer critical insight into how Agency policies and practices are being implemented on the ground, can highlight trends that can inform social worker training needs and areas where families need more support, and demonstrates in a very real way how the Agency values its foster families.

We are working on these issues with Director Donald and her team through the Agency’s Parent Advisory Council and through FAPAC’s ongoing advocacy work in collaboration with foster families. I’ve included them today to ensure that the Committee is aware of what foster families themselves are identifying as core solutions to addressing the Agency’s challenge of recruiting and retaining quality foster families and to ask the Committee to ensure that CFSA has the resources and supports needed to create these necessary changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be glad to answer any questions.

**Wayne L. Enoch, MSW**

**President, AFSCME Local 2401**

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

**CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing**

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I am Wayne Enoch, President of AFSCME Local 2401. I have been an employee of the Government of the District of Columbia at Child & Family Services Agency (CFSA) for twenty-seven (27) years. I am also a long time District of Columbia resident.

AFSCME Local 2401 is the Collective Bargaining Unit of over 1800 employees from various agencies. We serve many of the District's most vulnerable citizens. We have about 400 members at the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). As the agency continues its efforts to become independent of court monitoring, we continue to represent our members' interests and ensure that they are fairly treated.

At the end of 2019, we renewed our quest to have a viable Health & Safety Committee, as required in our contract. Our concern has been the safety of members while doing home visits as well as in the office. Our members have had to deal with attacks by clients. One would think that this was an issue in the community, but the issue became most apparent while in the office; which one would consider to be a safe space. After complaints of disruptive clients, the agency responded with a temporary plan to ensure clients have a safe, appropriate place to wait in the building. As the agency continues to assess the situation, Local 2401 remains committed to monitoring any incidents and the agency's plan for a permanent solution.


Currently, the agency struggles with worker turnover. Specifically, social worker turnover is a concern. CFSA is not alone in this issue. Virginia's Department of Social Services had the same problem in 2018. I learned that the VA turnover rate is 60 percent within the first year.<sup>1</sup> One issue is VA appears to be pay substantially less and yet they have the same problem as DC. CFSA social workers complaints stem more from work/life balance; support from supervisors; and micromanagement. As far as pay goes, Local 2401 continues to monitor Career Ladder Increases at CFSA. The agency has a procedure in place that continues to make sure social workers receive promotions and can focus on their clients, instead of whether or not they will get promoted.

Local 2401 has continued to partner with CFSA in many areas, with an effort to improve and enhance the working conditions of our members. I believe our Labor Management Partnership Council (LMPC) is second to none. By coming together with the director, we have implemented many initiatives to address the well-being of our members. The agency has hired a Wellness Coordinator, with the specific duty of implementing activities for addressing the well-being of staff. Although there is staff to address it, Labor has not stopped its efforts. We continue to be at the table for other initiatives like Workplace Innovations and Employee Feedback. We also have partnered with the HR Labor Relations Manager to provide ongoing trainings on the union's Master Agreement/contract. Managers and Shop Stewards have been participants. I have shared many of these initiatives with our other agencies and some agencies appear willing to begin similar programs.

In closing, I would like to state that AFSCME Local 2401 continues to advocate for its members and is always willing to meet with the agency's managers as well as this committee. As you can see from my

testimony, the common theme is partnering and working together for a better workplace. When encountered with many of the day to day issues, District agencies should work with the unions for resolution. We will continue to bring our issues to your attention in hopes of have resolution. We want the citizens of the District to receive the services that they need and deserve. We also want a workplace that facilitates these services by competent employees who are properly trained and properly treated.

Thanks for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne L. Enoch".

Wayne L. Enoch, MSW  
President, AFSCME Local 2401

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2018/08/27/long-hours-low-pay-and-constant-turnover-social-services-agencies-in-virginia-struggle-to-keep-staff/>

**Testimony to the Committee on Human Services  
For Performance Oversight Hearing for the Child and Family Services Agency**

**Marcia N. Huff  
Deputy Director, Young Women's Project**

**February 12, 2020**

Good Morning Chair Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Marcia Huff and I am the Deputy Director for the Young Women's Project (YWP). I am a DC resident living in Ward 7. YWP is a DC based multicultural organization that builds the leadership and power of youth and young adults to shape DC policies and institutions to expand rights and opportunities for DC youth. YWP is a nationally recognized leader in youth development with a twenty-five-year track record of rigorous, successful, outcomes-based programming and training, teen leadership development, and institutional change successes. **I am here today to share YWP's experience as the contractor for CFSA's aftercare program from 2017-2019.**

YWP's work focuses on three DC youth realities: poverty, unemployment, and poor health outcomes. Our programs guide youth through a process of personal transformation so they can become leaders in their peer groups, schools, families, and communities who are able to analyze problems, identify solutions, and advocate for change. Our work engages under-resourced youth of color, ages 14-24, with a focus on teen women and youth in care; more than half of our young people live or go to school in wards 7 and 8. YWP works with youth in 24 DC high schools and all wards and manages two offices: (Connecticut Ave NW (W1) and Benning Rd NE (W7)). The CYA work was mostly run out of our Benning Rd. office.

YWP's model engages youth on three levels – as peer educators, employees, and advocates. Youth come into our organization as peer health educators through the Youth Health Educator Program (YHEP). They work 5 hours a week, receive extensive training in sexual health & peer education and build their skills in self advocacy, work readiness, and health education. Youth work on teams and with a manager, apply their skills, develop professional behavior, put together a portfolio of work products, and earn a pay check. Youth who stay with the YWP program for 9 months (about 50 youth) move onto Youth Justice Campaigns where they work in partnership with our adult staff to organize and advance policies and programs that increase rights, resources, and opportunities for youth through research, policy analysis, advocacy, and social media. All of our youth are paid – starting at \$7.25 and moving up to \$10.50. YWP also provides individual counseling, help with college applications, system advocacy, and referrals to housing, health care, and other resources.

*Since 2001, YWP has been advocating to expand rights and opportunities for youth in foster care as part of our Youth Poverty Program. We build the power and leadership of system-identified and homeless youth -- training them as leaders and advocates, who work to expand educational and employment options, improve placement conditions, and expand youth rights. In the past 19 years, we wrote and passed group home and independent living regulations, drafted and passed a foster youth bill of rights, established a mandatory allowance and clothing voucher for all children and youth in care, and established a transportation voucher for older youth. Our work with emancipated youth grew out of this history and our advocacy to deepen support and training for emancipated youth in 2016 through the creation of the Benchmarks for Older Youth – created by a community working group that CFSA put together in spring 2016.*

In the fall of 2016 YWP was awarded a contract with CFSA to provide aftercare services to emancipated youth. In February 2017 our contract commenced and we launched the Center for Young Adults (CYA) to develop and support 100 emancipating young adults each year through a center-based program that included capacity building training, peer group supports, individual coaching, and financial support. During the 2.5 years running the program we connected and work with more than 100 former foster youth to meet rigorous benchmarks for employment, education, housing, health, community engagement and also make significant progress toward independence. CYA was a program designed with the goal of

interrupting the cycle of poverty for youth emancipating from foster care. Built on a foundation of youth development and youth adult partnership, CYA integrated work and best practice from successful models across the country (Generations Center NYC, Youth Villages, Transition Center Oakland) along with our own two decades of comprehensive, outcomes-based programming with DC's most at-risk youth. Instead of providing case work only (which is what the traditional CFSA model) young adults who participated in CYA received case work support, coaching, training, financial support and had to commit to peer support circles and work toward goals in employment, education, housing, health, community engagement and other areas. YWP's devoted 40% of our year 1 contract budget of \$842,000 to youth financial support and wages.

CFSA referred 165 youth and we worked with 101 over the 2.5 years that we had the contract. Out of this 101, 80% participated in bi-weekly trainings and support. More than 75% of young adults made consistent progress on core benchmarks and goals. Most notably CYA staff was able to move 57% of youth who were unemployed at the time of their baseline into part time or full-time jobs by the 12-month mark. In the course of year 2, 68% of youth who had unstable housing when they came into CYA were moved into stable temporary and permanent housing. During the 2.5 years we implemented this program, the design and interventions changed significantly. The level of youth crisis necessitated an increased level of individual crisis intervention, highly hands on case work, and emergency financial support. Although CYA achieved many successes, ultimately, we were not able to implement the intended youth-employment based model. What was launched as a youth employment and community engagement program quickly became an individual casework and coaching focused program. Youth participants requires such a high level of emergency support and one on one crisis intervention, that they were not able to move into the roles of peer educators, advocates, and trainers. Further, we are a small organization with minimal administrative staff. The administrative resources required to manage CFSA's financial invoicing requirements – the paper work and the many-month delays in reimbursement – caused and continues to cause organizational hardship. During the course of the 2 year, 9-month contract, we were paid \$999,066 and are still owed \$308,489. Our cost per youth has been about \$7,500 per youth – which includes an average of \$2,500 a year in compensation for each youth adult.

In late April 2019, without notice or a discussion, CFSA decided to terminate our CYA contract for convenience as of September 30, 2019 in order to bring this work in-house. Although it was not our choice, the opportunity to transition out of social service contracting and back into youth employment and advocacy was a welcomed change. We are continuing to engage foster youth as part of our youth educator program but we are no longer, formally working with emancipated youth.

I served as CYA's program director and it was hard work. In addition to my role as director I also had my own caseload. The work was challenging, devastating, eye opening yet inspiring. I worked with an amazing team of social workers, youth developers and advocates who put their heart and soul into the work. We also connected with numerous outstanding community partners for support and resources. We experienced firsthand the institutional dysfunction and inaccessibility existing with DC's public benefits, mental health, housing, education, employment and justice agencies. Agencies, if fully functioning, would have made the lives of our participants significantly easier.

It was not 9-5 work. We worked evenings and at times had to support youth during weekend crises. We not only support our participants but also their children and at times their partners. It was a family affair. When our contract started in 2017 we were enthusiastic about taking on the challenge. We had spent years advocating for changes to the aftercare program and were involved in the groundwork for the RFP. We were overjoyed at being awarded the contract and we were extremely proud of our program plan. We believed that our approaches and interventions would blaze a new path for the aftercare program. One that would lead to improvements within the agency including a closer focus on older youth in care and truly preparing youth for life after emancipation.

We worked with incredible young people through CYA. We were encouraged at their resilience, determination to succeed, sense of humor and kindness despite all they had experienced. Many have been on their own for a long time and struggled to reconnect to formal systems. Too many had experienced unimaginable trauma and heartbreaking instability during their short lives. More than half were parents and wanted to create a happy and healthy homes for their children. They fought to get them into quality schools and made sure that all of their needs were met. The vast majority of the youth we worked with were unprepared to succeed when they emancipated from care at age 21. Most faced significant challenges in literacy, work force preparation (many never held a single job before coming to us), housing, parenting, and mental health. Most of the young adults we worked with spent a significant amount of time in their teens and early 20s on their own, engaging with peers and street economies. They developed a set of skills and coping mechanisms that got them through care and allowed them to survive – but those same set of skills and inexperience with formal institutions placed them at a significant disadvantage in completing their education, finding employment and building healthy relationships. At times I was haunted with the thought of whether it was simply too late to turn things around and interrupt the cycle of poverty and despair. We cannot communicate enough the importance of early interventions, training and support for youth while they are in middle school and high school.

My work with participants often began before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday because I was the point of contact for pre-emancipated youth. I attended Youth Transition Planning meetings (or YTPs) and Jumpstarts. I saw firsthand the large and hardworking teams that supported youth during their final months in care. These are teams who were invested in the youth's success. The focus of the meetings were often employment and housing with most youth lacking viable options for either. It was evident that most youth were not aware of what awaited them at emancipation because many thought that they would get a job and move into their own apartment. Few were interested in housing programs or group homes as options. It saddened me that so many were on the eve of disaster and didn't really know it and their teams, although well meaning, often fed into the misconception about resources post-emancipation, especially concerning housing. There were many times when I wanted to just stand on the table and yell "look you aren't going to have your own place anytime soon! You don't have a job!" I had many difficult conversations with youth trying to balance sharing the reality of what was to come with not breaking their hearts or discouraging them.

### **Program Approach & Engagement**

CYA vision and design was intended to move youth into a position where they were stable with options. This means that they had housing for at least the next 6 months and they had made distinct progress toward their career goals. Designed in the spirit and framework of other YWP programs, young adults would receive paid skills development that would allow them to develop a range of capacities that would equip them to improve their own lives, advocate for their peers, and build job skills and capacities that would lead to permanent employment. Guided by CFSA's Transitional Benchmarks for Older Youth, CYA's original program design was built around eight young adult outcomes which YWP continued to track for each individual youth throughout their time in the program. Each young adult participating in the CYA program, by age 23, will be:

1. Working full time at a living wage job; demonstrate effective work practice and job search skills.
2. Have their high school diploma or GED and are engaged in ongoing learning.
3. Have stable housing with a sustainable rent level.
4. Are responsible parents and have the resources to address physical, emotional, and educational needs of children.
5. Demonstrate commitment to saving money, and understanding of financial issues including budgeting, savings, credit, and credit cards
6. Use positive coping strategies, managing anger, and avoid drug use, practicing stress reduction, and positive, proactive sexual health.
7. Are able to act as effective self-advocates in navigating institutions and utilizing core life-independence skills (communication, problem solving, conflict resolution, relationship building, goal setting, personal efficacy)



8. Are voting, engaged in civic institutions, and working to improve the community.

**We ran the program using six main strategies/approaches:**

1. **Capacity Building Trainings** CYA offers regular, incremental, interactive skills-knowledge weekly trainings (2-3 hours long) on a range of content areas covering the transition to adulthood benchmarks including: self-advocacy, employment, housing, financial management, pregnancy & parenting, mental, physical, and sexual health, education, health, and civic engagement. These sessions built skills identified through individual working sessions and peer support groups. These sessions included interactive, hands on group work that combined instruction, practice, work assignments, positive peer pressure and support, and close supervision by caring staff with high expectations
2. **Peer Support Groups (PSGs):** Youth participated in weekly group sessions where staff reinforced self-advocacy skills, and provided a space for venting, peer-based mentoring, and counseling. Although individual interventions were the foundation of the CYA program we held a strong belief in the importance of group interventions because it was essential that participants develop the proper skills to positively work in groups and communicate with their peers. Each week CYA staff facilitated a two-hour Peer Support Group (PSG). Often, when working with marginalized populations, practitioners do not do enough to emphasize that participants are the experts in their own experience. The PSG directly combated this practice. Through these group sessions, community was built, and participants came to rely on each other for problem sharing and solving. Participants also discussed life skills such as advocacy, budgeting, healthy relationships, systemic oppression etc.

Upon the commencement of the peer support group space, CYA participants were able to foster a stronger community and began communicating with each other outside of the space. Participants shared life experiences they had with relationships, family issues, children, seeking employment, and commencing education. A space that started with the facilitator having to strongly encourage young people to share their problems, turned into frequent requests for wanting to share issues they faced. Unfortunately, this led to a bit of tension and clashing amongst some participants due to former interactions with each other outside of the space or developed tension due to what was said in the space. As a result, CYA had to regroup and create standards to ensure the safety of participants of the program.

3. **Individual case work, coaching, and crisis intervention:** Individual support was the foundation of the CYA program. Staff provided one-on-one support, crisis intervention, problem solving assistance and counseling as needed through 1-2 monthly Individual Support Sessions (ISS). Staff worked with youth to identify resources, complete applications, and work through issues they were experiencing. Staff also use these sessions for identification of emergency support and interventions. Participants were required to meet with their Partner Coach (case worker) in person twice month (once if they were working or in school full-time) and staff were in touch with youth throughout the month via text, phone and email.
4. **Workforce Readiness Programming & Career Coaching:** Staff facilitated weekly employment workshops and provided individual career coaching. The weekly sessions were used to help participants transition from a mostly unstructured schedule to one where they were required to actively engage and participate, produce products and set goals. Staff worked with youth to develop healthy habits and practices for finding and maintaining employment including using planning tools for time accountability and productivity, assisted with them developing short- and long-term career goals, and built their knowledge of career paths for various industries and occupations.

We used weekly employment workshops in conjunction with individual coaching to support participants who required significant support or who were working toward specific career goals. Goal setting and time management were major challenges for many of the participants therefore staff dedicated time nearly every session to these two concepts. Participants often had a lot of free time but did not use it intentionally or productively to achieve their goals. Staff worked hard not to judge participants on how they used their time—a majority used their time to relax and spend time with friends or family--- but rather help them to develop plans to carve out time each day for productive activities so that they made incremental steps toward their goals. Participants also created employment focused goals that were edited and revamped each month. Staff worked closely with participants to turn goals into weekly tasks that were used on their time management plans.

5. **Financial Support:** CYA offered participants different sources of financial support: 1) a monthly transportation stipend that was tied to program engagement; 2) an hourly rate for training sessions; and 4) emergency support for food, clothing, and essential documents.

The monthly transportation stipend went through many transitions during the 2.5 years that we ran CYA. Our goal was that the stipend served as an incentive for participation but also provided needed support to travel to our office, their important appointments, job interviews and other places necessary for goal achievement. On average participants were eligible to receive \$150 a month in a stipend. They were eligible to earn additional amounts up to \$250 for completing goal tasks and participating in CYA workshops and coaching sessions.

6. **Community Service Referrals:** Staff connected youth with community partners for resources and services related to employment, education, healthcare, food, clothing, fitness classes, parenting classes, vocational training, child care and any other important area. Many participants struggled to meet their (and their children's) basic needs and these referrals along with the emergency support was a lifeline.

**CYA Tracking and Evaluation Systems:** CYA used a detailed multistep system to track participant progress and determine program effectiveness. We conducted preliminary assessments with youth prior to their emancipation. The focus of these assessment was on employment and housing. Once youth officially entered the program at emancipation staff conducted an initial assessment gathering baseline data on participants. An identical assessment was done upon discharge at 23. Staff tracked their interventions and support, as well as participant progress on a monthly basis for each participant on their caseload. This tracking was a mix of a narrative on monthly activities and actions taken by staff and participant and also a status ranking in the outcome areas-employment, education, housing, parenting, financial, mental health, and civic engagement. Each month we also tracked youth engagement (via contact with program) and goal achievement. Staff worked with participants to develop goal plans and the plans were updated once every 4 months. These goal plans served as the roadmaps for the monthly work being done by both staff and participants.

We were required to submit monthly and quarterly reports to CFSA. This is one area where we experienced challenges not because we were not collecting the right information but because it was difficult to package our extensive data in a way that was digestible for the agency. We also wanted to provide more detailed information than seemingly the agency desired. Our team had numerous meetings to align our needs with those of the agency and ultimately no definite solution was found.

Data collection on a program such as CYA is challenging due to the nature of the work. Participants made progress but it was often in baby steps littered with setbacks and obstacles. This was especially true in the areas of education and employment. Moving from long term unemployment (or never having a job) to being employed was a long and arduous journey---one where a participant regularly attending weekly workshops and staying the whole time was seen as progress considering they had spent the past 4 years disconnected from any formal institution. Progress might also look like a

participant attending an information session for a DOES program, showing up on time, but ultimately never following through with enrollment.

**Staffing:** In the course of the 2.5 years we ran CYA, the design and interventions changed significantly. The level of youth crisis necessitated an increased level of individual crisis intervention, highly hands on case work, and emergency financial support. Our first wave of staff were social workers per contract requirements but we quickly realized we needed staff, possibly social workers, who were action oriented fast thinkers, had group facilitation and training experience, were invested in youth leadership development and most importantly were expert problem solvers. We needed staff who had pluck, were scrappy and were open to using non-traditional approaches to working with youth. What emerged was what we called our Partner Coach approach. Our staff worked in partnership with participants to build their capacity, assist them with developing and making progress toward their goals and coaching them through the various issues that arose. We used a strengths-based approach but we had an agenda to bring them to a place where they were stable and on a definite career path. Exhausting work but some of the most important of my careers.

### **Participant Baseline Data and Progress Outcomes**

During the course of our CYA contract, YWP continued to track youth on 7 outcomes using 5-8 indicators for each outcome. The two most important data points are – where did they come in and where did they get to by the time they aged out of our program at 23. The young adult baseline data is a significant indicator of the success of CFSA's in-house programming and youth progress. CYA data on key young adult indicators show a lack of preparation and stability at the point of emancipation. Here is the baseline data for 75 youth that were engaged in our programming during years 2 and 3. The data for year 1 is similar:

1. 38 (51%) were unemployed, and seven (9%) were employed 15 or fewer hours; 15 out of the 75 (20%) were employed full time.
2. 31 out of 75 youth (31%) were homeless or couch surfing at the point of referral; 32% were in temporary housing, 17% in rapid housing, and 9% in permanent housing with a long-term voucher or in an apartment that was sustainable based on employment.
3. 41 youth (56%) have one or more children.
4. 20 (27%) need help managing marijuana or other drugs.
5. 43 (58%) have mental health issues that are not adequately managed and pose significant impediments to progress in employment and housing.
6. 17% had no GED and no high school diploma, 34 (45%) completed their GED, 19 (25%) had their high school diploma and 6 (8%) were enrolled in a two-year degree.
7. 27 youth (36%) did not have bank or deposit accounts of any kind.

**Snap Shots of Young Adult Progress:** YWP was able to engage 52 out of the 75 young adults who received baseline assessments in year two. As part of that work, we compared baseline data to end of year data for youth working in employment and housing. The snap shot provides insight into the progress made by CYA young adults during this contract.

**Employment Progress Snap Shot:** Out of the 75 youth who received baseline assessments during contract year 2, 38 were unemployed when they come into CYA. Out of those 38 unemployed youth:

- 11 moved into employment within the first 3 months (including 2 in part-time employment, 6 in full time employment, and 2 seasonally employed, 1 was in job training)
- 16 had moved into part time (8) and full-time employment (8) by the 12-month mark

- Overall, CYA staff was able to move 57% of youth who were unemployed at the time of their baseline into part time or full-time jobs by the 12-month mark.
- 9-12 of those youth were designated inactive during this time because of discharge, transfer to Wayne's Place, transition to college 40+ miles away or moved 40+ miles from DC

**Housing Progress Snapshot:** Out of the 75 youth who received baseline assessments, 31 youth were homeless or couch surfing (unstable temporary housing--living with others without their own designated space) when they transitioned into CYA.

- Out of the 31 youth who were homeless or couch surfing, 25 were engaged with CYA services. Out of those 25 youth who were engaged in CYA services, 17 were in permanent and temporary housing at 3 months, 17 at the 6-month mark, 12 at the 9-month mark and 15 at the 12-month mark.
- In the course of year 2, 68% of youth who had unstable housing when they came into CYA were moved into stable temporary and permanent housing in the course of year 2.
- 12-14 of the 31 youth those youth were designated inactive during this time because of discharge, transfer to Wayne's Place, transition to college 40+ miles away or moved 40+ miles from DC

#### **Center for Young Adults (YWP Aftercare Contract): Year One Highlights (2.17-1.18)**

*Summary: YWP worked with 121 youth including 65 emancipated youth at any point in time (on average) and 35 still in care. YWP was able to engage 80% of the youth in our care with 65% of young adults engaging in meetings and capacity building twice a month. More than 75% of young adults made consistent progress on core benchmarks and goals. We are still calculating the individual comparison data. Our aggregate data, especially from the last two quarters show significant progress.*

**Overall Numbers:** Total emancipated youth in YWP's care ranged from 58 to 68.

- **Housing:** The percentage of young adults experiencing homelessness, couch surfing or short-term family stay fell from **47%** in Q1 to **28%** in Q2 and **25%** in Q3.
- **Employment:** The number of unemployed young adults **fell from 40% in Q1 to 24% in Q2** and stayed at that level in Q3 and Q4.
- **Financial management** continued to improve steadily with a big bump in Q4 with the percentage of engaged youth enrolled in savings accounts or direct deposit accounts jumping from **33% to 65%**. This is the result of a big push to engage youth in financial management and enroll them in checking accounts and direct deposit accounts (and get them onto YWP's direct deposit).
- **Self-Advocacy:** Young Adult self-advocacy skills showed an increase from Q1 to Q4 with the higher 3 levels (actively solving problems and positively navigating institutions) increasing from **36% in Q1 to 78% by Q4**.

#### **Young Adult Goals Met by Quarter**

- Young adults collectively met 115 goals between quarter 1 and quarter 2.
- Young adults collectively met 90 goals between quarter 2 and quarter 3.
- Young adults collectively met 119 goals between quarter 3 and quarter 4.
- Comparison of baseline data to discharge data: This is something we are still working on. We will have these numbers as part of our final written report.

#### **Engagement:**

- ✓ Engagement rates in Q1, Q2, and Q4 quarters 1, 2, 4 were above **80%**. Quarter 3 dropped down to 73% due to staff shortages but was back up in Q4. Young adults are required to come into the office for meetings and trainings in order to demonstrate engagement (and receive the transportation stipend).
- ✓ More than **65%** of young people in Q1, Q2, and Q4 came into the office to engage in working meetings or capacity building sessions at least twice a month.
- ✓ Q4 shows a significant bump in capacity building engagement (**from 4% to 22%**) due to increased offerings and outreach. Our goal is to reach 30% by the end of February, 40% by the end of March and 50% by the end of Q1 in year 2.

**Participant Progress and Struggles:** *The majority of our work focused on five key areas: employment, housing, education, mental health and parenting. Below are snapshots of our work in these areas.*

**Employment Progress:** The majority of participants were unemployed when they emancipated from care and entered CYA. CYA aimed to support at least 75% of participants into part-time employment or a training program by their 24th month in the program. CYA staff connected participants with job training and certification programs that opened the door to jobs that pay more than minimum wage and have more job security than food service or retail positions. Staff worked hard to assist participants with addressing barriers related to housing, mental health, substance use/abuse and childcare. Ultimately CYA staff were able to move 57% of youth who were unemployed at the time of their baseline into part time or full-time jobs by the 12-month mark. While we are proud of this success, we hoped that participants would not simply transition into "right now jobs" but rather enter long term career paths. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Despite staff strongly urging participants to enroll and providing hot handoffs with partner programs, very few participants enrolled in a training or certification program. Participants were often focused on finding something quick and easy to apply for (and unfortunately low paying and unstable) and therefore were resistant to enrolling in training programs. Staff understood their concerns with a longer-term route—most needed money immediately but many of these same youth ultimately did not find work neither did they enroll in a training program.

**Employment Challenges:** One of the biggest CYA miscalculations was related to employment. The original CYA program model included 20-22 in-house positions that would be held by CYA participants. Ultimately only two participants held these positions. Staff quickly found that nearly no participants were ready to move into these positions. The few who would have been a good fit were already working or in training programs. Most participants were not ready for full-time positions. Nearly none had held a full-time position and an alarming number had not held a job for longer than 1-3 months. It is hard to get a job without experience at 21-23. It is especially difficult in DC. The few opportunities that these youth found paid minimum wage and often had unreliable schedules. What staff thought would be a process of building capacity, providing in-house opportunities and transitioning participants into the community was simply not realistic. CYA experienced significant success with participants who had past work experience and/or post-secondary education and training and just needed a bit of capacity building, community connections and coaching. These participants found employment (and maintained it) but there was little to no success with those who had significant barriers.

Throughout the running of CYA approximately 10% of participants were never employed, did not enroll in a post-secondary training or education program and did not take any significant steps to accomplish their employment goals. About a quarter of the participants expressed an interest in finding employment and made incremental progress toward employment goals such as applying for positions or attending CYA employment programming but were unable to find a job or keep one for more than 30 days due to significant barriers. These barriers were related to housing, education, substance abuse, mental health and childcare. Many in both these groups were highly engaged with CYA, regularly attending groups and meeting with their partner coaches yet due to significant systemic barriers and their lack of follow through outside of the office, they made very little progress toward their goals. Two-thirds of these participants had never held a job (or not for more than 30 days) in the past. Due to this group's lack of work history and general soft and hard skills deficit, staff spent a significant

amount of energy trying to enroll participants in the Department of Employment Services' Career Connection or Project Empowerment programs. These program targets youth with significant barriers to employment. Numerous CYA participants registered and attended intake session but less than 7 enrolled in the program. Four completed the initial month-long workforce readiness portion of the program and ultimately only one participant entered unsubsidized employment.

As of April 2019, CFSA no longer referred new participants to the program. Looking at the data between March 2019 and September 2019, very few participants started new jobs or enrolled in any new programs. This is because in the final 6-7 months of the program participants who were employed maintained their employment and those who were chronically unemployed (see details above) unfortunately remained so.

**Housing Progress:** CYA staff helped youth helped identify viable and realistic housing options by referring youth to transitional housing programs, disseminating information about affordable housing supports in the city, and connecting youth with DHS resources. CYA staff developed an Affordable Housing tool that assisted with finding available units—including those that accepted vouchers, Rapid Rehousing and third-party payment. Additionally, CYA staff assisted participants with maintaining their housing by identifying rental and furniture assistance programs, communicating with landlords when issues arose and facilitating groups and providing individual coaching on budgeting. There were a handful of participants who have long-term stable housing options such as those with a long-term voucher for example the Family Unification Voucher, those living in a two-income household or staying with well-resourced foster families. In the last 6 to 7 months, the housing status of most participants remained the same.

**Housing Challenges:** The majority of participants emancipated from foster care and entered CYA with unstable housing. Few had their own apartments or designated living space within the homes of others. There is a common misconception that stable housing will be provided for emancipated youth based on a mix of youth misinformation and confusion during CFSA transition planning process. Although CFSA reported in the 2019 oversight hearing that 98% of youth emancipated had stable housing, our numbers show that at the time of emancipation less than 5% of older youth had stable housing without rental assistance (CFSA Rapid Housing, DHS Rapid Rehousing, Housing Choice Vouchers, etc.). Most youth had tentative arrangements with family members (the ones whose homes they were removed from), friends or romantic partners – sleeping on couches or the floor in homes that were already filled past capacity and where a simple disagreement could result in eviction. CYA staff assisted participants with applying for transitional housing and rental assistance programs but there are not many of those programs—especially for youth without children. Unfortunately, due to the insane housing costs, in January 2020 the average 2 bedroom rented for \$2750, even participants who found full-time employment and had rental assistance struggled to pay their bills due to 75-90% of their income being used to pay rent. The prospect of them being able to maintain their housing post-assistance was not positive.

Lack of housing resources and supports was a major obstacle to engagement and participant progress toward goals. The instability often prevented participants from being able to focus on employment or education. Without safe, affordable housing participants struggled to escape the crisis cycle—no housing, nowhere to store belongings (or food), constant movement, nowhere to go during the day, involvement with the legal system, unemployment, etc. Many participants moved 2-3 times during their time with CYA. There needs to be more housing resources for youth leaving care so that they can focus on their education and employment goals—not basic survival.

**Mental Health Progress:** Staff assisted youth with obtaining mental health support through the DBH Access Hotline. Staff worked with youth to identify providers and understand the assessment policies of most core service agencies. Getting to a first appointment can be a long process. We also led workshops with youth on understanding mental health diagnoses and coping with stress and trauma. Staff also worked with youth to develop tools for positive mental health by identifying positive behaviors and habits such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing, and journaling to incorporate into their daily routines. Ultimately, six participants finished their intake process with a CSA and participated in individual or group therapy.

**Mental Health Challenges:** By the time participants were referred to CYA, they had already experienced mandated mental health services for the trauma they survived. Many had negative experiences with mental health providers and were hesitant to participate in services again. Participants struggled with various mental health diagnosis and for many this was a significant barrier to making progress toward their goals, completing simple daily tasks and interacting positively with their peers, children, and community members. Mental health resources for youth are extremely inaccessible and there are very few services focused on the 18-24-year-old population. Lapses in Medicaid coverage extended already long waits for mental health services and medication. Participant struggles with mental health was also a barrier for both group and individual CYA in-house interventions. Staff had to develop protocols aimed at reducing violent outburst during group sessions and individual meetings. For a small number of participants, their negative mental health and the resulting behavior resulted in their termination from the program.

**Education Progress:** Staff assisted 4 participants with applying and enrolling in college and as of September 30, 2019 of the 4 were still enrolled. Staff also supported two participants who were already enrolled by providing coaching and financial resources. Staff connected all youth who did not have a GED to the OSSE Reengagement Center for resources and support. Ultimately, two participants made significant progress toward obtaining their GED and one obtained their high school diploma.

**Education Challenges:** Participants were referred to the program with diverse educational experiences. The vast majority had a high school credential. According to our baseline data, 17% had no GED and no high school diploma, 34 (45%) completed their GED, 19 (25%) had their high school diploma and 6 (8%) were enrolled in a two-year degree. The participants who had not obtained their GED experienced the most challenges in the making progress toward education and employment goals. In order to address barriers that have been presented, CYA staff have held group sessions about the GED process, study sessions for GED material, individual coaching sessions and referrals to community partners. The CYA office's proximity to DC Reengagement Center (1 block away) and relationships with their program staff made it easier to refer participants as a resource yet few obtained their high school credential. While obtaining a high school credential was a priority CYA benchmark, very little progress was possible without youth investment.

While most participants entered our program with a high school credential, most of these participants did not want to obtain another degree/certification for several reasons such as a negative association with school and the educational system or they could not spare the time due to their other expenses including rent, food, and clothing. For many participants the extended process of applying for school, financial aid and having to take additional test was extremely daunting. Youth who were interested in a 2- or 4-year degrees lacked the financial aid from the government or CFSA to pay for their education. Youth in care have access to ETV funds but only youth enrolled at the time of emancipation have access to funds after emancipation. In the last 6 to 7 months, no participants enrolled into new education programs because those already enrolled maintained their status and other participants made incremental progress but did not complete educational goals.

**Parenting Progress:** Half of CYA participants were parents or expecting parents. CYA staff worked to support parents by providing referrals to organizations such as Mamatoto Village, DC Collaboratives, Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center and assisted in completing applications for benefits such as WIC, TANF and SNAP. CYA staff assisted with resources for childcare including vouchers and identifying programs such as summer camps and completing the DC school lottery application. CYA staff helped participants obtain material resources through organizations such as Toys for Tots, personal donations and through store gift cards.

**Parenting Challenges:** Many participants who were parents struggled to meet all of their children's' needs. One of the greatest needs participant who were parents had outside of employment was adequate child care. Many parents found jobs, especially in food services and retail, but they struggled to find childcare during non-traditional hours. Also, although nearly all were eligible for child care vouchers, the application process and processing period often made starting a job quickly nearly impossible.



### Recommendations

1. **Start young and go deep.** Our biggest recommendation for the agency is to aggressively start preparing youth for life after care when they are young because by the time they are 20 it is nearly too late and it is extremely hard to turn things around. Youth are easier to influence and mold while they are young, are not yet parents and are still connected to formal institutions. It is easier to focus on goals when youth have food, shelter and clothing. Keeping them alive by making sure that they have adequate placements, food and clothing is simply not enough. Supporting the high achievers is simply not enough. This support looks like making sure that youth are enrolled in high quality schools and receiving the educational support they need to thrive.
2. **Tracking & Evaluation.** CFSA should begin closely track older youth outcomes via the key benchmarks starting at age 14 or 15. A system should be used similar to what was required for the aftercare contract. The data (ours and CFSA's own) indicate that the years between 18-21 are marked with a significant lack of employment or educational progress and increased child bearing. The agency should be held accountable for what is being done during that period and a plan should be developed to make sure that the right type of work undertaken during those last years because the current system is a failure.
3. **Workforce Development.** CFSA should be more intentional and hands-on in preparing youth for the workforce. There needs to be a "nowhere to hide" approach because the stakes are high and options few for youth who emancipate with little to no work history or post-secondary training. Youth must have more options than part-time work in retail or food service. This work must start early and go deep. The agency must make a commitment to significantly increasing the number of youth emancipating with post-secondary certifications and training at 21. Youth should be well on their way to a career by emancipation.
4. **Group Interventions.** We strongly urge OYE including the leaders of the new CFSA Aftercare program to incorporate a group support aspect. Our group work was extremely challenging but it was important because youth have to learn how to communicate and work with others. This work caused us the most problems and required a high level of planning, training, engagement and quick thinking. There was conflict, even fights, but the skills that youth developed were invaluable. Too many were disconnected and isolated from 17 or 18 years old until then (at 21) and in our group space they learned how to communicate assertively, share their feelings and collaborate with their peers.
5. **Increased Housing Options.** Emancipated youth need more housing options and discussions about housing need to start at 18. The goal is not to scare youth but they need to fully understand the housing market including the low likelihood of having their own place at 21.
6. **Post-Secondary Education Support.** If possible, CFSA should change the policies with ETV. Youth should have access to ETV funds for post-secondary education and training until their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday or at least until they are no longer eligible for aftercare services. Thankfully DC has multiple free training programs but most youth have no way to



pay for training. They are barely affording the basic necessities of food and housing. Access to money for training could make a significant difference in youth being able to find jobs in security, nursing or hospitality.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions and serve as a resource to the committee.

# A WIDER CIRCLE

A unique, holistic approach to ending poverty

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**Amy Javaid**

**Senior Vice President, A Wider Circle**

**Testimony before the Committee on Human Services**

**Children and Family Services Performance Oversight Hearing**

**February 12, 2020**

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Good Morning Chairperson and Members of the Committee- Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

My name is Amy Javaid and I am the Senior Vice President at A Wider Circle, a regional nonprofit working to help individuals and families to rise out of poverty. I am here to discuss our involvement with CFSA and in specific, as a grantee under the Families First DC program.

In December 2019, A Wider Circle was honored to have been selected as one of the awardees of the Families First DC program under the Child and Family Services Agency. Through this contract, we will develop a Family Success Center for the Washington Highlands community.

A Wider Circle has been serving in Washington Highlands since 2016, when we were invited to set up a community center by the District of Columbia Housing Authority. We believe that Families First DC has tremendous potential to foster long term change in this community and in multiple other locations across the District. The goals of empowering residents, integrating services, and focusing upstream, embody an approach to impact and sustainability that are critical.

The challenges that the residents of the Washington Highlands community face are complex and multi-faceted. Violence and poverty are more visible than new commerce or quality of life

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**programming. Solutions must be large-scale and interconnected with residents leading the way. These efforts have the potential to increase access and utilization of resources needed for families not just to survive but to thrive.**

**Families First DC, in partnership with CFSA, and the other implementing partners, can provide hope, skills, and opportunity. Collectively and in close collaboration, we can build a community of practice, build on evidence-based models, and foster change. We have appreciated the planning, meetings, and guidance provided to date and know that the team at CFSA have the passion and skills to guide each selected partner to achieve all of the stated goals.**

**CFSA's commitment to families across DC through projects such as Families First DC is evident at all levels. We have attended meetings where Director Donald, right alongside the Family Run Organizations, seek solutions that are truly the best for children and families in the District.**

**We believe in CFSA, in Families First DC, and most importantly, in the children and families in Washington Highlands. Now is the time for all of us to not merely hope or dream but to act - to support and to walk alongside residents - families and children alike- in fostering their leadership, advocacy, and success.**

**We look forward to on-going implementation, partnership, and true results. The families and the next generation in Washington Highlands and all across the District deserve this and more.**

**Thank you.**

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Testimony of Karen Feinstein  
Executive Director, Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative

Before the

Committee on Human Services  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Brianne K. Nadeau, Chair

Concerning Program Oversight

Of the

Child & Family Services Agency

February 12, 2020

Good afternoon, Chairperson Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Karen Feinstein, and I am the Executive Director of the Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative. I am pleased to be before you today to talk about Director Brenda Donald's proactive Family First Prevention strategy, which involved implementing a thorough prevention plan development process. The Healthy Families/Thriving Communities (HFTCC) Collaboratives had a critical role in its development.

The Family First Legislation that dovetailed with the end of the five-year Title IVE Waiver presented challenges but also an opportunity for CFSA, the Collaboratives and other public and private entities in the District of Columbia that address the wellbeing of parents and children. It challenged us to further improve early intervention supports for at-risk families, which was part of the HF/TC Collaboratives' founding mandate. Director Donald recognized this and set in motion a process for determining how best to accomplish it. She got out in front of the planning process by inviting Children's Bureau

Associate Commissioner Jerry Milner, the Incoming Family Court Presiding Judge Peter Krauthamer and leaders from every Collaborative to a site visit at the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative in June 2018. This visit focused on four families' challenges and the types of supports that were provided by FSFSC staff. From the family members' stories, it was clear that the path toward solutions for unique and intense challenges was based on the compassion and strong relationships of the Collaborative workers and the innate and often newly discovered strengths of the clients themselves. In the ensuing discussion, we jointly focused our attention on how case management helped families emerge from profound losses with the confidence to pursue new opportunities and, in some cases, accept mental health care and other types of behavioral change. It was clear to those of us on the CFSA and Collaborative side of the table that case management in primary prevention of child abuse and neglect would need to rest on evidence to prove its worthiness for funding. Although we know case management is critical in the primary prevention of child abuse and neglect, we would need to have research to prove its worthiness.

Director Donald convened the Family First Prevention Plan Work Group in June 2018 with assistance from Clare Anderson, Policy Fellow at Chapin Hall. Subsequently, CFSA and the Collaboratives embarked on an ambitious path to better understand the utility of Family First in DC and explore the target populations that would position CFSA to focus its prevention efforts. The goal was to develop a prevention plan in early 2019. This was accomplished through a careful and well-managed process of data-gathering, sharing and analyzing that included public and private agencies, the Collaboratives and CFSA. A series of work groups looked at what evidence-based practices were already

utilized in the city that were recognized by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare, what types of families they targeted, how they engaged participants and their pattern of utilization. In the eventual DC Prevention Plan that was submitted to the Agency for Children and Families, the use of Motivational Interviewing (MI) was defined as the evidence based practice that best represented CFSA and Collaborative practices. At the time of that submission, MI had not yet been reviewed on the Clearinghouse, but CFSA is now pursuing approval as it is a critical component of our joint work. CFSA has invested in training for Agency and Collaborative staff to ensure this practice becomes standard. This is an example of the commitment CFSA has made to our ongoing partnership.

As a representative of the Collaboratives, in August 2018, I attended one of the ACF's Regional Meetings to inform states and tribes around the country of the guidelines and promise that Family First had in store for them. Director Donald's presentation at the Atlanta Forum was impressive and encouraging. I had gone in admittedly concerned about how proscriptive the new federal legislation was but I emerged with optimism about DC's chances to not only succeed but be a leader in implementing primary prevention strategies that work.

We have programs in the District that seemingly are working well for families but are not recognized as evidence-based. This applied to some of the Title IVE funded Capacity Building grantees. Although they could not be included in the Family First Prevention Plan, Director Donald acknowledged their importance to families and therefore continued funding some grantees with local dollars that include an evaluation

component. We are hopeful that they will merit being considered evidence-based programs.

In every aspect of the ensuing planning process, CFSA has followed up with structured feedback opportunities, working meetings with Collaborative staff and other public and private partners in the city, joint decision-making and, ultimately, joint responsibility sharing for the success of the prevention efforts in the city. I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the outstanding work of Natalie Craver, Community Partnerships Program Manager, for her skilled management of the Family First planning process and implementation. It is a pleasure to work with her and her team.

Thank you.

**Testimony of Mae H. Best, Executive Director  
East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, Inc  
before the  
Committee on Human Services  
Regarding the  
CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing  
February 12, 2020**

Good Morning Chairperson Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Mae H. Best and I am the Executive Director of the East River Family Strengthening Collaborative, located in Ward 7. Thank you for allowing me to express my support of the District's Families First DC Initiative.

In December 2019, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced the Families First DC Initiative. Families First DC is an initiative by Mayor Muriel Bowser focused on families in Wards 7 and 8. It is a neighborhood based, whole family approach to provide upstream, primary prevention services and neighborhood driven resources. The initiative aims to empower communities and families, integrate government services and programs to build on family strengths. Grants were awarded to organizations to plan and implement ten Family Success Centers in Wards 7 and 8. The communities selected for this initiative were;

Ward 7 Neighborhoods:

- Benning Terrace/Benning Park;
- Clay Terrace;
- Mayfair/Paradise;



- Stoddart Terrace/37<sup>th</sup> St;
- Benning Rd and Minnesota Avenue NE

Ward 8 Neighborhoods:

- Woodland Terrace;
- Anacostia
- Congress Heights
- Washington Highlands
- Bellevue

Effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative (East River), was awarded grants to plan and implement Success Centers in **Benning Terrace/Benning Park and Benning & Minnesota & Ridge Ave.** We are humbled and proud to have been selected for these communities. We are also very supportive of the other organizations selected to plan and implement Success Centers and will work with Director Donald and her team at Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to ensure the success of not just our Centers but of all Families Success Centers located in Ward 7 as I am sure our partner collaborative, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative will do in Ward 8.

Since that time, East River has interviewed and hired Program Managers to lead the planning for each of our communities. We deliberately selected managers who grew up in Ward 7 or in the selected communities and who still had ties to those communities. We are in the process of preparing for our first community forums which will be held on February 26, 2020 and February 28, 2020. On another note, East River has entered into a contract with the

Benning Park Apartments to operate a Success Center in that community, independent of funding from CFSA. So, technically, East River will be operating three Families Success Centers in Ward 7 with two of the centers located in the Benning Terrace/Benning Park Communities.

In developing our proposal for submission to CFSA, we met with community residents and organizations in the various Ward 7 targeted communities. We wanted to see what the residents felt they needed and what they saw as pressing needs. Many of the communities already had versions of Resource Centers in their areas and couldn't understand why planning had to be undertaken. Our task was to inform them that the idea of the Families Success Centers was to have programming based on documented needs of the community and not what they (residents) believed was needed. Our concern was that we not submit a proposal that was based on preconceived needs of the community but to let this play out organically during the planning phase. Many residents felt the planning process was too long but were open to accepting the process. They were informed that an Advisory Committee would be developed to advise East River and CFSA in the development of the Success Centers. The composition of the Advisory Committees for our Success Centers will be completed by the end of February.

CFSA has involved the community in planning for Success Centers for at least the past year and beyond. About two years ago, CFSA took a team consisting of their staff and members of the Collaboratives to visit a Success Center located in New Jersey. During the past year, Director Donald spoke to several groups in Ward 7 about the Families First DC Initiative, including the Ward 7 Pastors and Faith Leaders. She wanted the community and organizations to hear about the Initiative and wanted everyone to have a chance to apply. She shared that

the sites could be very small; located in libraries, churches, etc. She wanted to give every community an opportunity. East River, likewise, shared this information widely as we wanted to make sure every selected community was aware of this opportunity.

The Families First DC Initiative is reminiscent of the development of the Healthy Families Thriving Communities Collaboratives. The collaboratives underwent a long community planning process, including residents from public housing and organizations, to come up with their model. In our initial phase, most of the collaboratives were located where our families resided. As time passed, we became larger and had to find new locations. While most of us have satellite offices, the main office is in one central location. I believe that Families First DC is off to a good start by planning multiple Centers throughout the ward rather than planning one central site in the various Wards. This means that residents can attend a site within their neighborhood to receive their services they need. This also means that if appropriate resources are available, the chances of the families becoming known to CFSA lessens. It is also my hope that the Success Centers not replicate the existing Collaboratives but rely on the Collaboratives for Case Management and other services not provided by the Families First DC Success Centers.

Thanks you so much!

**Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative**

2041 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave., SE

4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Washington, DC 20020

fsfsc.org

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**Testimony of Dionne Bussey-Reeder, Executive Director**

**Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative**

before the

**Council of the District of Columbia**

**Committee on Human Services**

Fiscal Year 2020 Performance Oversight Hearing regarding the

**Child and Family Services Agency**

February 12, 2020

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Good afternoon Chairman Nadeau and members of the Committee. I am Dionne Bussey-Reeder, the Executive Director of the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative. Last night as I was finalizing my testimony, I looked in my old files and searched my predecessor's files and found a document that read, CFSA Oversight Hearing Testimony 02122014 so I opened it and to my surprise it was the testimony that I provided on behalf of Far Southeast Collaborative when I was the Community Engagement Director. The testimony was written on the creation of a model that is now the Families First model.

At that time, the Collaboratives were working closely with CFSA, under Director Donald's leadership, along with several other community based partners to find an alternative innovative program, similar to the successful Healthy Family Thriving Community Collaboratives structure of service delivery, but with more community facilitated programs and resident driven activities. Six years ago, Director Donald was thinking of ways to create an opportunity for the government, community based organizations, and residents to collaborate and create a place where anyone could receive guidance on opportunities, and access or resources that could improve their families quality of life. Together, we wanted to create a place where everyone could work to build a sustainable Community Helping System that was government funded, resident driven, business supported, and evidence based guided. Now, six years later, I lead an organization that will operate the concept that we worked to help develop and is now called the Family Success Center model.

The Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative have always operated programs with a strength-based approach, like all the Healthy Family Thriving Community Collaboratives. Focusing our strategies on what the families believe are best for them, creating welcoming environments, and having staff that are open, engaging, and extremely sensitive to the trauma and stress our families are enduring. Additionally, we wanted to create places where residents could offer their knowledge and skills within the communities they live and work. We are and will always be committed to ensuring that we work with families who want to remain in Ward 8 and thrive; engage seniors who wish to age in place; and that we are welcoming to new residents who wish to raise their families in the great Ward 8 communities. With the support of this opportunity, we are closer to achieving this goal.

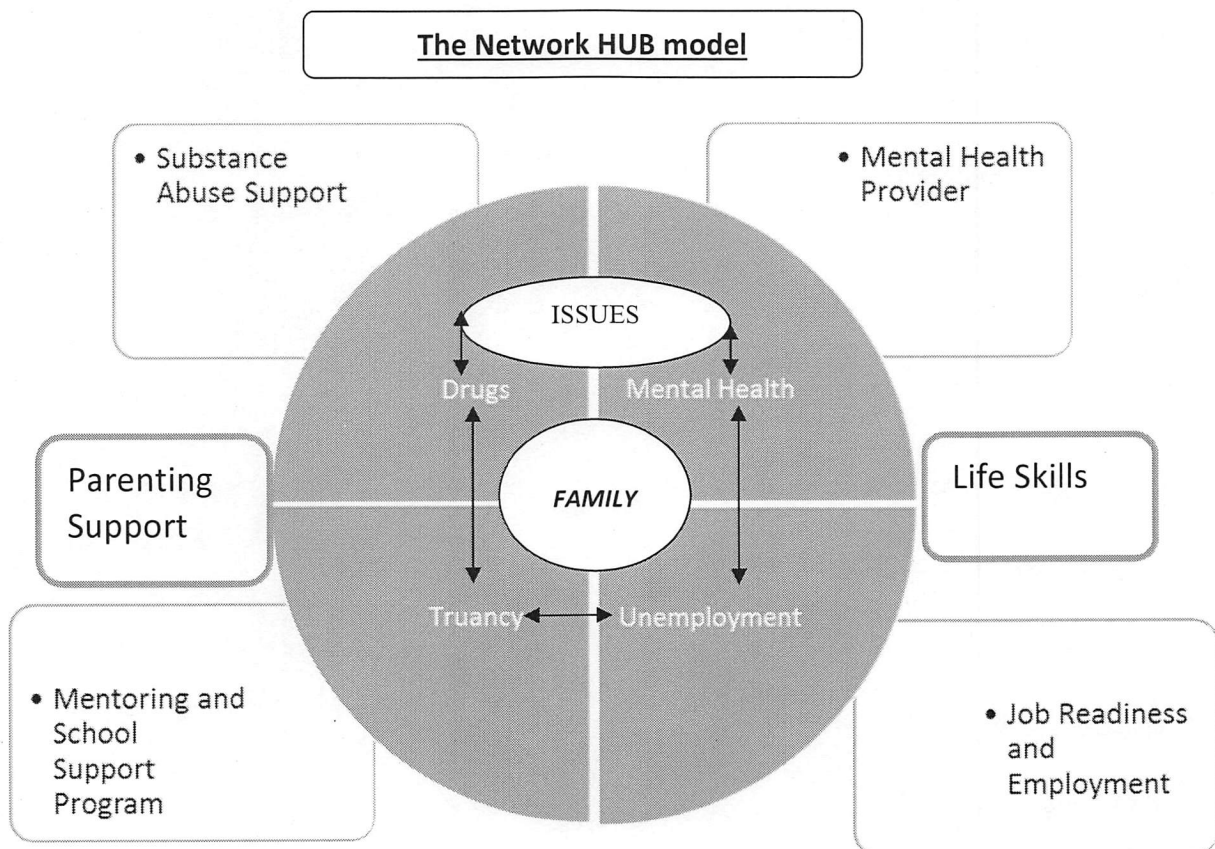
One of the most important aspect of this opportunity with the Family Success Center model is that FSFSC will be able to work with families to be economically self-sufficient. The reality of the lives of many of the families that are living in poverty in ward 8 is the lack of real economic mobility. As awesome as our staff are with the resources we have and our history of service delivery, oftentimes we are not able to spend adequate time planning how to execute our work with the families we serve. With the Families First model, we will have the ability to spend time planning programming with the people who will be affected by the center. We believe that this will yield to ultimate success. Imagine, the outcome and commitment when you have a part in the development. The Families First model puts the power back in the hands of the person who deserves it, the resident.

How do we work to provide real linkages to resources, opportunities and networks that are not driven by government guidelines and timelines? How do we do it in a way that is not intrusive and disruptive to our communities? How do we create access for our families to achieve the greatest level of success without us telling them how to do it? We do that by allowing the people who live, work and play there to show us how it's done. We lean on the mantra "Nothing About Us Without Us". That's the Family First model! This model forces us to be reminded that we all are Servant Leaders, not just Leaders. This allows us to give indigenous organizations like the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative an opportunity to take their years of work, community knowledge, and respect of the cultural and use these resources to guide a process that provides the residents the power.

This center will not only have homebuying classes, financial literacy and credit counseling, but it will have entrepreneurial opportunities, classes on "Opportunity Zone" funding, how to create business plans that are fundable, and CBE training and linkages to programs that will open up doors that will help move families to the middle class. It will also give our families who are doing well, a place to share

their knowledge and tools to help others grow. If we, if CFSA, if DC government, if all of us do this right, we will see a tremendous increase in financial stability and family stabilization in communities that are hurting and challenged. Family First allows us to engage the residents, the community stakeholders, the business community, faith community and all other parties affected in a new way that can propel our families to higher levels of success. I am convinced if implemented correctly, this could truly change the trajectory of the city and the families we serve.

As I close, I am reminded of the model we presented six years ago. In that model, we stated that we needed a HUB that was comprised of all tenants of wraparound services to address substance abuse, mental health, housing, family support and parenting. The model I shared six years ago looked like this diagram:



The Family First model will not only incorporate all these tenants, but will also include the community guiding planning process and the creation of what's best for their community. It wasn't coincidental that six years ago I testified that we should move forward on this approach under Director Donald's leadership, and today I am proud to say, I will have an opportunity to help lead and implement

this program in a community where I am a Servant Leader. I believe together we can and will work with the residents and service providers to create opportunities and resources that will guarantee that the families across the District of Columbia are receiving a quality safety net of services within their own community.

We appreciate all that this committee and you have done, Chairperson Nadeau, to support the Collaboratives and the communities we all serve, and I thank you for this opportunity to testify.

**Erica Coston**

**Program Director, North Capitol Collaborative and Mayfair Mansion and Paradise at Parkside**

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

**CFSA's (Child and Family Services Agency) Performance Oversight**

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February 12, 2020

The Honorable Chairman Brianne K. Nadeau  
Mayor of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite (suite number)  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Nadeau:

Thank you, Chairman, Nadeau, and members of the Committee of the Whole for an opportunity to testify and support Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) Oversight. My name is Erica Coston, and I am the Program Director with North Capitol Collaborative, Inc. and Program Manager for Families First DC Ward 7 Mayfair Mansions and Paradise at Parkside communities. I'm testifying on behalf of Mayfair Mansion and Parkside communities to support Child and Family Services at this oversight hearing. Also, to demonstrate NCCI's gratitude to Director Donald and the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) staff for their innovation, foresight, and continued commitment to support and strengthen Mayfair-Paradise neighborhoods and families in their neighborhood through primary prevention services in the present and for future generations. Without CFSA – Families First DC funding vulnerable neighborhoods and families' quality of life indicators, such as health, wealth, social life, education, safety, and security, would continue to suffer.

To provide a little context of the Mayfair-Paradise community, according to a recent Urban Institute/DC Promise Neighborhood's needs assessment, the Mayfair/Paradise community, located within neighborhood cluster 30, is a residential neighborhood in Ward 7 and is geographically located on the eastern bank of the Anacostia River. Jay Street NE bounds it on the north, Foote Street NE on the south, Kenilworth Terrace NE, and Anacostia Avenue NE on the West and Kenilworth Avenue NE on the east. Important to note is that this community's access to the entire Ward 7 is impaired by Interstate 295, resulting in an isolated community devoid of community resources, including basic amenities such as a grocery store and access to vital city services. It is also cut off from the rest of the city on the east by the Anacostia Freeway (Highway 295), on the west by federal and District parklands and the Anacostia River, and on the south by a nearly closed Pepco (electrical) plant.

Living in this isolated place are hundreds of low-income families coping with an array of challenges: high poverty rates, high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, and high rates of teen pregnancy. Without a coordinated effort, akin to Families First DC, children growing up in this community face a challenging future; children growing up in neighborhoods marked by concentrated poverty are at risk for a range of negative outcomes, including poor physical and mental health, academic failure, risky sexual behavior, and delinquency. The median household incomes in the



Parkside-Kenilworth neighborhoods are about half of the citywide median (\$56,519), averaging just about \$23,000. Not surprisingly, more than half (58 percent) of the residents in the northern neighborhoods participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or “food stamps”) in 2010. The vast majority (90 percent) of households with children in the footprint neighborhoods are single female-headed households. The targeted neighborhoods, especially in the northern census tract of 96.01, also have some of the highest shares of teenage births, although Mayfair and Paradise have experienced above-average shares of teenage births in the past as well. The schools located in the targeted communities also have high-need populations. Virtually all of the students enrolled in the schools qualify for free and reduced lunch and virtually all are minority students. Unemployment continues to be significantly higher in these neighborhoods than in the rest of the District, particularly in the neighborhoods in the southern tract of 96.02 (presumably because more residents are still participating in the labor force as opposed to dropping out altogether as they may have in the northern census tract). While the statistics are daunting, they are not insurmountable. The brilliant design of Director Donald, Families First DC will improve these statistics and prevent many families from coming to their front door by Improving the life indicators for this community is one of the goals Families First DC. The program CFSA funding enables community partners to close, build, and bridge gaps and resources in coordinated efforts through collaborative partnerships with an emphasis on families not yet involved with the child welfare system.

Through our partnership with CFSA, Director Donald, and her team, North Capitol Collaborative, Inc.’s (NCCI) commitment to the Ward 7 community entails what NCCI’s mission states- to empower families, youth, seniors, and communities to become more self-sufficient. We have and will continue to identify and work to attract resources, improve partnerships to build the capacity of Mayfair-Paradise communities collaboratively, and will help to protect the livelihoods of families and individuals by providing a variety of quality services. Collectively and collaboratively with Mayfair-Paradise Community Advisory Council, NCCI’s will employ and exercise practices adapted to transform and move communities toward change, and that empowers the community in the decision-making process at every stage by breaking down barriers and building opportunities for every member of that community. This is the beauty of Families First DC; the community is the change agent creating a shared vision for their community based on collective impact and a common agenda.

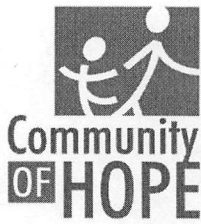
Finally, we support the full funding of CFSA Budget, program, and services, needed to prevent families from coming to the door of CFSA or staying too long once inside the doors because community-based resources are not accessible to assist them in-place in their communities. D.C. residents, regardless of their economic conditions, deserve more and expect more from the Nation’s Capital. NCCI’s urge the City Council to provide CFSA the requested financial support so that all families can thrive.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

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Erica Coston,  
Program Director, North Capitol Collaborative and  
Mayfair Mansion and Paradise at Parkside



**Testimony on  
FY19 Performance Oversight of the Child and Family Services Administrative (CFSA)  
Before the Committee on Human Services  
February 12, 2020**

Good morning, Chairperson Nadeau and members and staff of the Committee on Human Services. I am Melissa Millar, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Community of Hope, a Federally Qualified Health Center and homeless services provider. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on two Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) activities – Families First DC and the Child Protection Register (CPR) background check process.

**Families First DC**

Families First DC is a part of CFSA's Family First Prevention Plan, an offshoot of federal legislation, the Family First Prevention Services Act. The program's goal is to provide services to families at risk of entering the child welfare system by allowing federal reimbursement for mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and in-home parenting skills training. The District is the first jurisdiction in the country to have its implementation plan approved

Community of Hope is thrilled to have been chosen as one of 10 Families First DC grantees. Community of Hope was chosen to operate the Bellevue Family Success Center at our Conway Health and Resource Center location in Ward 8. We will also partner with grantee Martha's Table at our shared location at The Commons on Elvans Road, SE. Through this initiative, the Family Success Centers will work with local community advisory councils established for each center to drive the programming desired by the community and connect families to resources and services. This work is meant to **empower communities** by supporting their specific needs, **integrate services** provided both by the government and community and tailor services to families' needs, and **focus upstream** by promoting protective factors and ways to mitigate trauma as a means to prevent crises through early engagement.

Starting last month and continuing through September, the grantees will be working through the planning phase, with the goal to identify priorities by the summer. After identifying the community's priorities, we will turn our focus to implementation, including whether to bring on board any subgrantees to fulfill community service needs. Community of Hope's activities will also supplement our focus on health and wellness, and maternal and child health.

We are very excited to be partnered with CFSA and the communities we serve in this effort and look forward to further empowering and strengthening families. Funding from the Family Success Center grant will allow us to expand our work focused on eliminating health disparities,

as well as create more capacity for community involvement and evaluation. We have really appreciated the true sense of partnership with the CFSA team on this project so far. It is especially a gift to have nine months for a thorough planning process, and to ensure that neighborhood voices drive the next steps in the process.

### **Child Protection Registry (CPR)**

As a homeless services provider, our housing team does great and innovative work for District residents. We provide prevention services, shelter and transitional housing, and permanent housing program services for families in Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing (FRSP). In 2019, we served 1,229 unique families in these programs:

- 652 families served by our Prevention program,
- 319 families served by our Rapid Rehousing program,
- 170 families sheltered and assisted at the Triumph, Ward 8's short-term family shelter,
- 159 families supported in our Permanent Supportive Housing program, and
- 75 families served by our shelter and transitional housing programs.<sup>1</sup>

By law, our programs, including the Families First grant, require a variety of background checks on all employees and subcontractors considered "safety sensitive".<sup>2</sup>

At the Triumph, Ward 8's Short-Term Family Housing facility, we have all new and current employees and any subcontractor employees (security, janitorial, and food services) screened before entering the facility and annually thereafter, for issues that may adversely impact shelter residents.

Per our contract, one check is a Child Protection Register (CPR) review through CFSA. We have run into challenges with this process, but want to note to Council that the agency will be hosting listening sessions next week to hear ways to ensure that the process is transparent and efficient. To that end, we will preview a few suggestions to consider.

Some challenges may result from staff size and available funding. We know of at least five CFSA employees doing this work but are unsure the size of the full team. We *do* know we have challenges with timing, communication, and process, and suggest additional FTEs and/or funding for this unit could be helpful. In just our agency, 100 or more employees need this CFSA check upon hire and annually, and we monitor subcontractor screenings. Therefore, we have at least 150 people to be screened each year. Multiplied by the six other Short-Term Family Housing programs, the multiple shelter, Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing providers across the District, as well as the other Families First grantees, and a few thousand or more people may need this annual check.

In addition to increased staff and/or funding, we note other issues and potential improvements:

Time required for completing the checks is inconsistent; if not completed timely, there are sizable repercussions. The process starts by hand-delivering a notarized form, as we were advised to hand-deliver to ensure processing. For new employees, checks typically take 14 days,

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<sup>1</sup> Some families participated in more than one type of program, such as transition from shelter to housing program

<sup>2</sup> See DC Official Code § 1-620.31(10) and 27 DCMR 500 *et seq*

versus recertifications for existing employees, typically taking 30 days but has taken up to eight weeks. When recertification results are delayed, employees can't enter the building and are unable to work. This can negatively impact provider-client relationships, not to mention their paychecks. It can also negatively impact the organization as we must scramble to find an employee to temporarily work with affected clients or find a cleared and available subcontractor employee to fill schedule holes. We seek clarity on processing procedures to ensure our paperwork is filed timely and employees, clients, and subcontractors are not disrupted.

We also recommend development and implementation of technological process improvements. Hand-delivering written, notarized paper forms in 2020 cannot be the best use of anyone's time, nor the safest or most strategic way to accomplish this work. We recommend the District pursue a dashboard and/or portal system whereby documents can be easily and safely uploaded, and organizations can easily see document status and expected approval dates.

Such a system may eliminate a few additional challenges – reCompleting a CPR check if within the year when a covered employee switches to another covered employer and needing to provide the same information year-over-year. An electronic system could retain employee information, such as residential history, eliminating the need to provide annual notarized but redundant information. A dashboard could track the approval process, eliminating confusion among agency partners (such as DHS) about when a CPR is *completed* by CFSA versus when the CPR is *received*. This variance can result in employees being unable to work even though the completed checks cleared them, because of delays with the paperwork being *received*. Currently, we physically drop off the paper form, receive a paper receipt, and eventually receive an email that the person is cleared. Having a dashboard would provide significantly more communication between the agency and its clients and improve the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.

## Child and Family Services Oversight Hearing

Testimony submitted by Deborah Shore, Executive Director of Sasha Bruce Youthwork

Chairman Nadeau and Members of the Committee on Human Services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am Deborah Shore, ED of Sasha Bruce Youthwork and I am here to share my enthusiasm about the initiative that CFSA has undertaken with your support called the Family Success Centers. These are resource centers at 10 Public Housing projects in the city that will greatly enhance families living in the toughest conditions to have access to the supports they need and want.

Sasha Bruce is a youth and family services agency with the mission to improve the lives of runaway, homeless youth, who are disconnected and in risky situations and their families which we achieve through providing shelter, counseling, life skills training, educational support and positive youth development activities to over 1500 youth each year.

Sasha Bruce has operated a Youth Center at the Clay Terrace/Richardson Dwellings site for almost 10 years now. In that time, we have done our work there with little opportunity for support even though the families and youth there are in such great need. We have often had robust summer programs and have then kept the doors open as a safe space for the young people living there but without much foundational support. We often could not be open every day during the school year for instance. We have been committed to being there though because when we were invited into the community after a spate of awful violence, we were asked by the community leadership about whether we would stay

because otherwise we would not be welcome. They had seen too many good initiatives come and go. So we promised to be hang in there and we have. Even without all of the supports, we have seen young people moving away from involvement in negative activity, seen young people go off to college. There has been a mens group meeting there every week for 5 years led by our staff who grew up in that neighborhood and knows the community well and one of our Board members, I am so glad we did stay because now the Parent Support Center is providing the foundational support we have wished for and it will expand our capacity. We will build a Parent Success Center in Clay Terrace on solid ground.

I am enthusiastic about the program that CFSA and Brenda Donald have initiated as I believe in its inherent value. Bringing a wealth of services to those who have the greatest challenges, assuring that all of the city agencies are aligned to be of help and to do so in a family friendly and empowering way is an award winning approach. There is great thinking that has gone into this initiative and I look forward to the 10 sites all having impact such that less children and youth are at risk of involvement in child welfare and juvenile justice.

**Cherie A. Craft, M.Ed**

**Founder/CEO, Smart from the Start, Inc.**

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

Committee on Human Services Oversight Hearing

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Good Morning/Afternoon Chairperson and Members of the Committee, thank you for affording my colleagues and myself an opportunity to address the hearing as a grateful new grantee of the CFSA Families First DC funding opportunity.

My name is Cherie Craft and I am the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Smart from the Start, Inc. Smart from the Start is a family support and community engagement organization embedded in the Woodland Terrace community which has as our mission to promote the healthy development of young children and families living in underserved communities. I also am proud to sit on the Mayor's Maternal Mortality Review Committee and to serve on the Department of Health's Maternal Child Health Advisory Council, here in the district.

Smart from the Start provides a holistic, and comprehensive set of trauma-informed, culturally reflective and strengths-based programs and services that serve to educate our children, empower our families and uplift our community. Programs and services include: Prenatal education, Baby Basics program, Toddler and Pre-school Play-to-Learn programs, homework help, Parenting education, on-site mental health counseling, GED classes, computer classes, job readiness, life skills, professional development and career certification programs, LEAP for Young Fathers, Family Leadership Program, crisis intervention, family stabilization and family advocacy.

Our programming is place-based, and is housed in a six-bedroom unit in the heart of the DCHA Woodland Terrace Housing Development, where the "Smart House" is affectionately referred to as the heartbeat of the neighborhood. Our doors are always open to anyone in the community in need of a kind word, hot meal or any support, whatsoever.

Our existing programming is funded by the DC Department of Health, and without the support of Dr. Nesbett and the team at DOH our work would not be possible, and we would not be here today to speak on behalf of CFSA as grateful new recipients of the CFSA Families First DC funding opportunity.

The community that we serve, no doubt has its challenges, however, more importantly has incredible strengths. The rich history, culture, sense of family, and resilience of the Woodland Terrace community give our children and families so much to be proud of. This sizable, long-term investment in resources granted by Mayor Bowser, Director Donald and the team at CFSA and Families First DC will provide Smart with the tools we need to expand our reach, deepen our impact and change the trajectory of the lives we touch.

Our new Success Center will double our staffing capacity and add new programming and services to promote the physical, mental, developmental and financial health and wellness of our families, by offering additional educational support for our children, civics and leadership training and opportunities, adult education classes, employment services, life skills, financial literacy and self-sufficiency

programming to ensure the personal and economic development of anyone in our community seeking such supports. What is unique about this particular opportunity is the freedom this process allows us to innovate and customize programming in close partnership with the families and residents we serve, alongside our large network of agency partners. While Smart was founded as a family and community driven organization, often funding of this magnitude comes with a rigid set of guidelines that explicitly determine who recipients of service must be, what services must be provided, when, where, how and by whom.

The well-funded nine month planning period afforded to grantees encourages and supports a very extensive and deliberate community needs assessment process which ensures that families, residents and stakeholders are key partners and collaborators in the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services in their neighborhoods, thus putting the power back into the hands of those who despite a lack of resources, know what the community needs, and what they need to succeed. We, along with our family leadership team, community advisory committee, residents and partners are humbled and grateful to have this amazing, unprecedented opportunity.

Our team is comprised of multi-talented, multi-disciplinary, passionate individuals who represent and reflect the diversity of the community – and who either live in or have deeply rooted connections to the neighborhood. Together in good times and difficult times, we have laughed, cried, mourned, celebrated with our families. We proudly introduce our children and families to their strengths and encourage and support them in dreaming dreams and setting and achieving goals they never before imagined possible. Our new funding and the creation of the Woodland Terrace Family Success Center gives Smart from the Start the tools and resources to breathe life into those dreams and goals and we are ready! We have hit the ground running and recognize the fierce urgency of our tasks.

In closing, on behalf of a community often marginalized, stereotyped, and counted out I want to express our deepest gratitude to Mayor Bowser, Director Donald, Octavia Shaw and the wonderful, committed team at CFSA and Families First DC. Your belief, trust and investment in Woodland Terrace and Smart from the Start means far more than you can imagine. After all, Smart doesn't just live in the Woodland Community, the Woodland Community lives in all of us.



**Life Deeds Inc. Family Success Center**

**Roger Bell, Program Manager Life Deeds Family Success Center**

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

Human Services Performance Oversight Hearing

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**Life Deeds Family Success Center Testimony**

Life Deeds Inc. is pleased to partner with Child and Family Services Agency. Our agency received the honor of the award to implement a Family Success Center in the Stoddard Terrace/37<sup>th</sup> Place SE neighborhood. Life Deeds has a longstanding history of service delivery in the southeast Washington DC. Through the Family Success Center Program, our agency has the opportunity to partner with area providers, include community members in our program building process and program development, and design a program that provides immediate and resourceful services to the community.

With this uniquely designed program, we are able to establish a welcoming environment where community members, families, and individuals are able to comfortably engage with center staff to receive the needed services for improved quality of life. CFSA is the brainchild behind a center that is family oriented, comfortably designed like a family homestead, and employs trained capable knowledgeable area providers who can discern the needs of the community and readily guide them to the service providers and community resources necessary.

CFSA has designed a jewel in the crown of neighborhood community programs, as the program comes directly to the neighborhood. It resides in the community itself. Participants are required to come up the street to obtain information and/or service assistance. This concept encourages participation and fuller utilization of the program service roster in complete. Further neighborhood buy-in takes place

with the Community Advisory Council which is comprised of neighborhood members and program staff. The council assures the voice of the community is employed with program development, scheduling, and overall activities. The work of community trust and open communication is greatly alleviated through outreach and the familiarity of the neighborhood center. The design of the program assists the staff in connecting with the intended targeted population.

Lastly, our agency has provided mentoring, substance abuse prevention, residential facilities, homeless services programs, and other family services to the district. This will be our first program that requires a home-like environment directly in the community to be our service hub. This means that the neighborhood members can point a finger at the location where they can receive guidance, information, connections to resources, and other program services. The Family Success Center will be a familiar, comfortable, safe part of the community. There will be no need for the participants to leave the area to receive what's needed. The benefit of proximity is a stronghold in the program's long list of advantages. The center staff will have the opportunity to better meet the needs of the community, as they will be readily available for service implementation as part of the community itself. Through our partnership with CFSA, Life Deeds Family Success Center will become a member of the neighborhood. We look forward to our engagement with the Stoddard Terrace/37<sup>th</sup> Place community.

**[Tiffany Williams]**

**[Chief Program Officer, Martha's Table]**

**[February 12, 2020]**

Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

**[Child and Family Services Agency Budget Oversight Hearing]**

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Good Morning Chairperson Nadeau and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Tiffany Williams and I am the Chief Programs Officer at Martha's Table. I am here to testify on behalf of the Child & Family Services Agency, namely its neighborhood based Families First DC initiative. Martha's Table was recently designated as a Family Success Center in the Anacostia Neighborhood of Ward 8.

In the Summer of 2018, Martha's Table made a bold move to our new headquarters at The Commons located on Elvans Road, SE to stand with neighbors in the surrounding areas and support families to thrive. For forty (40) years we've served the DC community through our Education, Food, and Family Supports programming. Over the past 18 months, we've listened and learned from our neighbors about the areas of support that will help them to thrive. Areas including but not limited to: access to quality jobs, parenting skills training, healthy food and health and wellness resources.

The Family Success Center aligns perfectly with Martha's Table's place based approach and commitment to the nearly 20,000 people living in the Anacostia neighborhood. Through the Family Success Center we will be able to build upon the many community assets that already exist and deeply engage our neighbors, local businesses and community organizations to deliver the essential support that will help connect people to the educational, economic and health resources needed to strengthen their lives. The Family Success Center will reflect the needs and aspirations of DC residents living in Anacostia while still serving as an access point for residents of the District of Columbia. Our goal is to have the Family Success Center serve as a neighborhood hub, a one stop shop to meet the needs of our neighbors through supportive, preventative and upstream services.

I'm here today to express to the committee how excited Martha's Table is to partner with Director Donald and CFSA to deepen our commitment to advocate for strong children, strong families, and strong communities. Our newly designated Family Success Center will deepen our work at The Commons. We relocated because Martha's Table truly believes that every Washingtonian should have the opportunity to thrive. We are confident that we will continue to support the growth and development of children in the neighborhood, promote family success and well-being, and fight for food justice and wellness.

As we celebrate our 40-year milestone, we are thrilled to become one of the first Family Success Centers in the District to better serve our neighbors. Thank you for your time and attention.

Testimony of  
Leslie Allen  
State Administrator, Children's Choice of Maryland, Inc.

**Child and Family Services Agency's  
Performance Oversight Hearing FY 19/20 (First Quarter)**

**COUNCILMEMBER BRIANNE K. NADEAU, CHAIRPERSON  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 11 a.m.  
Room 500, John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Chairperson and members of the committee, my name is Leslie Allen and I am here today representing Children's Choice. I am testifying on behalf of Child and Family Services Agency about the newly executed contract for Intensive Foster Care.

Children's Choice of Maryland, Inc. is a private, non-profit child welfare agency, specializing in meeting the needs of children and adolescents with medical, mental health or developmental needs. Founded in Philadelphia, PA, in 1982 and incorporating in Maryland in 1994, Children's Choice provides out of home placement for children who have experienced the trauma of abuse or neglect. A full continuum of services starting with prevention and in-home supports, out of home placement, and aftercare services are offered to children/families associated with our programs. As a Medicaid billable mental health provider, Children's Choice offers psychiatric rehabilitation, respite, and therapy for children and families throughout Maryland. Over 200 children are receiving services with approximately 120 in out of home placement. All services are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

The goal of this testimony is to describe the unique components of Intensive Foster Care. Overall, Intensive Foster Care seeks to match children at risk for placement instability with highly trained resource families who are supported by a team of qualified professionals to maintain those placements to children who historically would have resided in congregate care facilities. All youth are diagnosed with serious emotional disturbances, drug addiction, medical conditions and/or developmental delays and often have a history of physical/verbal aggression, failure to follow rules, destruction of property, stealing, trafficking, delinquent behavior, or criminal charges. Some may be pregnant or parenting teens.

The foundation of the Children's Choice began with the family-like atmosphere of each office. All staff are familiar with the children and families served and tailor the services to meet the individualized needs of that child and family. Intensive foster care mandates that the social work clinical teams work closely with the families and limit the number of cases assigned throughout the chain of command. This program will serve up to 36 children and employ one supervisor overseeing the clinical work of no more than 5 social workers and one family support worker.

As an experienced Child Placement Agency, Children's Choice is an expert at recruiting homes for special needs children. Of the current 140 certified resource homes in Maryland, all are licensed and experienced in providing Intensive Foster Care. Of these homes, 28 are in the counties surrounding Washington D.C with 16 being located within 15-miles of the city limit.

Well trained parents equipped to cope with the daily challenges of parenting children with traumatic histories experiencing mental health symptoms requires a different parenting approach. The principles of trauma-informed practice are infused in our daily practice and all training offered by Children's Choice. A resource parent begins their journey by completing the 30 hour New Generation PRIDE Pre-Service training. Within this introductory training, discussions led by the agency direct the focus to how parenting a teen with a trauma history is different and requires special knowledge and skill on the part of the caregiver. The components of trauma theory are used to assist foster parents in making "reasonable and prudent" parenting decisions as mandated by a new federal law and state/agency policy.

All staff and resource parents in their first year participate in multiple trainings to enhance their ability to effectively parent this special population. Resource parents participating in the intensive program are required to have at least 25 hours of training per year. These trainings may include the National Child Traumatic Stress Network 16 hour curriculum entitled Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma, Youth Mental Health First Aid and the 7 week AFFIRM curriculum for children identifying as LGBTQ.

An integral component to placement stability with special needs children requires accessible mental health services with well-trained and qualified providers. Maryland Family Resources Core Service Agency has agreed to partner with Children's Choice to provide individual, family and group therapy to children not already linked to these specialized services.

Recognizing the need for evidence-based practices, the clinical staff have been trained or certified in Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and AF-CBT for family therapy. AF-CBT is particularly useful for our placement stability therapist who conducts family therapy sessions including the child joining the family to prevent placement disruption.

In 2019 clinical staff were certified in the Strengthening Families evidence-based Parenting Curriculum and by December 2019 all resource parents completed this training as well. In 2020, the agency looks to expand upon a partnership with Kennedy Krieger Institute to train resource parents on the use of Cognitive Behavior Therapy and utilization of this approach in the home daily.

When parenting children with significant behavioral special needs, effective crisis prevention and supports must be in place. Every member of the household has an individually tailored, behaviorally based support plan. The Resource Parent Support Plan helps the caregiver identify their wellness, build their natural support system, identify personal parenting triggers, develop effective responses to those triggers, and identify outside supports available on a moment's notice. Recognizing that biological children in the home are also affected by a new child joining the home, their support plan identifies the common challenges for the biological/adopted children in the home, appropriate responses to those challenges and responses that will make the situation worse. Finally, the child joining the family develops a support plan with their team. This plan helps the child self-identify their triggers, behavioral responses they often have when faced with those triggers, ways their caregiver can respond to them that are helpful, and effective coping mechanisms for the child to implement.

In conclusion, Children's Choice practices multiple placement strategies to support the children and families served within the Intensive Foster Care program which stands out from regular foster care. These include:

- Competency-based training with a trauma-informed focus delivered by knowledgeable staff
- Access to an array of mental health services
- Well qualified licensed social workers certified and trained in multiple evidence-based practices
- Concrete supports to manage the daily needs of children



- Planned and emergency respite
- In-person and telephone crisis intervention
- Monthly in-service one on one or group training via live feed, online recording, or in-person
- One-on-one supervision services for children with severe behavioral challenges
- Frequent worker contact that can increase with the needs of the family to multiple times per week
- Individualized supports based on the child's needs
- Resource Parent Support Plans, Child Household Member Support Plans and Support Plans for the child joining the family
- Enhanced quarterly Treatment Service Plans for the child to address special needs and service providers

**Thank you for inviting me today to testify on behalf of CFSA regarding our program.**

**Isabella Suero-Stackl, LICSW**  
**Program Manager**  
**Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Foster Care Program**  
**Testimony before the Committee on Human Services**  
**February 12, 2020**

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Good morning Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee of Human Services. My name is Isabella Suero-Stackl and I'm the Program Manager for Latin American Youth Center's Foster Care Program.

First, I would like to recognize our partnership with CFSA, through which we have been able to provide child welfare services to youth in the foster care system for over two decades. LAYC is the main private agency responsible for providing foster care services to Latino families in Washington DC, especially to those who are monolingual in Spanish.

LAYC's Foster Care Program provides culturally sensitive services by placing foster children and youth in bilingual resource homes and providing bilingual social workers, who not only communicate in the clients' native language but are also well-versed with the cultural nuances of working with Latino families. Over the years, LAYC has assisted dozens of children in achieving permanency by reunifying them with their caregivers, or by achieving adoption or guardianship. We appreciate the opportunity to assist these families; however, we believe that we can do more.

I would like to bring three issues to the committee's attention and make some recommendations as to how LAYC can help address these concerns.

1. The Latino community in Washington, DC is vibrant and growing. As the population has grown, the city has not been able to adequately meet the community's needs. Day-to-day challenges, including economic instability, overcrowding due to lack of affordable housing, prevalence of domestic violence and substance abuse are risk factors for child abuse and neglect. There is a need to improve outreach efforts by CFSA, which would include providing psycho-education and support services to families at risk to help interrupt the cycle of abuse, which can go on for generations .<sup>1</sup> LAYC would be best positioned to lead such a campaign, through its existing community presence and bilingual and multicultural staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Racial Disproportionality and the District of Columbia Child Welfare System The Latino Community at a Glance-District of Columbia Government Child and Family Services Agency 2009

2. As the committee may be aware, through their in-home services, CFSA supports hundreds of children yearly who have come to the the attention of the agency due to allegations of abuse or neglect, but who have not been removed from their caregiver. LAYC, however, has no involvement with cases prior to out-of-home placement. We believe that LAYC has the capacity and expertise to serve children and families that have come to CFSA's attention prior to their removal. Spanish-speaking families can strongly benefit from a linguistically and culturally qualified support system from the moment they are identified by CFSA. If given the opportunity to establish an in-home unit we would be able to support families through our bilingual staff and existing community programs, which are already available at LAYC's various locations and through which LAYC is serving 5000 youth and families every year. These services include mental health and substance abuse counseling, STI and HIV testing, parenting programs, and educational programming. If assigned to LAYC, families with open in-home cases could immediately start receiving a variety of these services depending on their needs. Early access to linguistically and culturally appropriate community support and resources will help address the risk factors that bring families to the attention of the agency, and could result in a decrease in numbers of out-of-home placements.
3. While LAYC served about 20 children and their families at any given time during FY2019 (most of which were Spanish-speaking), CFSA served about 120 children who identified as Hispanic at any given time during the same fiscal year.<sup>2</sup> These numbers indicate that the majority of Latino families involved with child welfare in Washington DC, presumably many of which are Spanish speaking, have had to navigate the complexities of the child welfare system without proper language access and cultural understanding. Furthermore, the few families that are eventually referred to LAYC, are often initially managed by CFSA for several weeks or even months. The first few weeks after a child's removal are a crucial time for the social worker to build rapport with the caregiver from whom the child was removed in order for them to begin working on the steps required to reunify with their child. Language barriers can cause a significant delay in progress, to no fault of the family. If CFSA were to assign all Spanish-speaking families to LAYC for case management services, as soon as they come into care, whether in-home or out of home, we would be able to start working with the family towards permanency much more quickly and effectively.

Thank you council members for the opportunity to testify. I can now take any questions you may have.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://cfsadashboard.dc.gov/page/foster-care-demographics>



**Testimony to Committee on Human Services  
Council of the District of Columbia**

**Jordan Garrison, Associate Program Manager  
Capital Area Asset Builders (CAAB)**

**February 12, 2020**

Good morning Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Jordan Garrison, and I am an Associate Program Manager of the DC-based, non-profit organization, Capital Area Asset Builders (hereafter referred to as CAAB).

Today I am honored to provide testimony before this Committee, and discuss the extremely productive partnership CAAB has with the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

Our foster care youth have been able to benefit and continue to benefit from this partnership far beyond their time in care. Through our partnership with CFSA, CAAB manages the Making Money Grow Program. CAAB is working to assist DC foster care youth ages 15-21 to get on the path toward taking control of their finances, increasing their savings and building wealth for a better future.

For the past five years, CAAB has partnered with CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment to provide financial education services and lifelong skills around the importance of savings and overall money management to youth in the care of the DC government. The matched savings program provides youth the opportunity to receive a 1:1 match on up to \$500 each year from ages 15-17, and a 2:1 match on up to \$1,000 from ages 18 to before turning 21. If a youth starts the program at 15 and maximizes their savings, they can receive \$7,500 in matched funds and exit the program with \$12,000. The match funds can be used for housing, car purchase or repairs, health care expenses, education expenses, or to start a small business. Additionally, the program provides foster care youth the ability to use their matched savings funds for transitional purposes. Along with the match component of the program, youth also receive one-on-one credit coaching, and comprehensive financial education training. CAAB has witnessed the impact of this program on the lives of our youth, both while in care and once they transition from care.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the only matched savings program of its kind in the nation for the benefit of foster youth. We applaud CFSA for directly and financially empowering foster youth so that upon aging out they can have access to financial assets to deal with life.

Approximately 100 youth, are currently enrolled in the Making Money Grow Matched Savings Program, with an average account balance of approximately \$1,700. Many of our youth have used the program to purchase their first car, pay rent for their first apartment, pay off education expenses, and purchase medical necessities. Furthermore, youth in the program have worked tirelessly to build healthy savings habits, build their credit, and learn the importance of effectively managing their money.



Moreover, we are working with CFSA to inform all eligible CFSA clients of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). For the past four decades, the EITC has been considered the most effective poverty alleviation program in the nation. The ability of CFSA to enable CAAB to raise EITC awareness is of great importance and we are very excited about this expansion of our partnership.

We recognize and thank CFSA Director, Brenda Donald, and the team at the Office of Youth Empowerment for their involvement in the Making Money Grow program, and for their leadership in expanding our partnership and delivery of services to more CFSA clients.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Testimony of  
Robinette Rascoe  
Foster Parent  
Public Witness

2020 Performance Oversight Child and Family Services Agency, CFSA  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on Human Services  
Brianne Nadeau, Chair

February 12, 2020  
Wilson Building Room 500  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, DC, 20004  
11:00 am

Thank you Councilmember Nadeau and members of the committee for the opportunity to share my experiences with you today.

My name is Mrs. Robinette Rascoe and I reside in Cheverly, MD. I began my journey as a foster parent 20 years ago when I fostered several children with CFSA. My current experience as a foster parent began recently through the National Center of Children and Families because I now reside in MD. My children are all grown and out of the house, and my husband is retired, so we did not expect to have a 13-year old join us in our home or to fit in as well as our adopted daughter now does.

My 13-year old saw us, before we ever met her, at an event for foster parents. She later told us that she saw us interacting with another teenager at that event and she dreamed of a home like ours and asked to be introduced to us. We met her and began mentoring her while she was in another foster home. We just clicked. I went out of my way to spend time with her – picking her up on weekends, and driving her to her therapy sessions. When she moved in our home I knew we had made the right decision. Right in front of us she began to open up, we could see the light that she had inside her – she has so much potential. She is right where she needs to be.

My children and extended family immediately took to her – they set a great example for her and treated her like a member of our family from the outset. She suffers from low self-esteem and being around people who know how wonderful she is, has allowed her to feel comfortable and begin to talk and share with us her life experiences. We've seen improvement in her grades, how she carries herself, and how she dresses. She is so happy. There is something so emotional for me experiencing new things through her eyes. We took her to church for the first time, we took her out to dinner to a nice restaurant for the first time, and we were there for

her first family game night. My family, myself included, adopted her before it was ever a formal arrangement. When NCCF approached us about adoption – it wasn't even a choice. We had prayed and talked about it before we brought her into our home and we wanted to be her forever family.

My personal mission as a foster parent has always been – do what is in the best interest of the child and don't allow personal selfishness to be a barrier. Look at the moment you are in and make sure you have the resources that will prevent a child from slipping through the cracks. It is my belief that all the resources provided by NCCF have allowed my child to shine. This time fostering was much easier for me and my family because we had NCCF – it was easy to access the resources I needed and I felt surrounded by a team of professionals that would allow me to give a child a forever home. NCCF has been there for all of us through this process.

Thank you again for allowing me to share this testimony today.

Testimony of  
LaVonne Shaw  
Foster Parent  
Public Witness

2020 Performance Oversight Child and Family Services Agency, CFSA  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on Human Services  
Brianne Nadeau, Chair

February 12, 2020  
Wilson Building Room 500  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, DC, 20004  
11:00 am

Good morning Councilmember Nadeau and members of the committee, and thank you for allowing me the time today to provide testimony.

My name is Dr. LaVonne Shaw and I reside in Clinton, MD. I have been a foster parent for over 20 years. I started with another agency but have been with the National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) since 2015. I began my work as foster parent for special needs children; six of my children have had special needs. Many of my special needs children were successfully reunited with their families but I am very proud that my two oldest children went on to independent living and have been able to maintain their independence as adults.

After I married my late husband, I was working in hospice care and grieving the loss of my mother and I felt like I needed to make a change. It was then that I saw an advertisement about the need for foster parents of teenagers, specifically teen moms. I was really struck by this ad and I read that teen moms are harder to place in care and I thought it would be a nice challenge for me personally. I discussed it with my family, my daughter in particular, and we decided that it was a challenge that we wanted to take on together. Teens and teen mothers are a very challenging population but they have become my specialty. I love working with teens.

My mission as a foster parent is based in scripture – I have always wanted a large family and I strive to create an environment where family is first. My motto is “love works and family is family” and this has served me well as a parent. I recently had a teen in my home begin to realize this when she asked me how to begin the process of formally removing her from my home. I answered her honestly that I didn’t know the process because I have never put anyone out of my home, and I had no intention of starting with her. I could see her face change right in front of me. I told her that issues don’t get resolved by putting people out --- family is family and challenges have to be worked on together to overcome them.



I run my family like a team and NCCF has been a member of that team through every step of this journey. It has been a true partnership for me – I am in regular contact with my social workers and other NCCF staff. They provide necessary training and resources for me and my foster children. They have listened to my concerns surrounding the regulations on allowances for teens and I am participating with other NCCF foster parents to advocate for more flexibility on practical incentives for teens. NCCF is a supportive community that listens and appreciates the concerns of foster parents which allow me to be a supportive parent to the youth in my care.

Thank you.



# District of Columbia International School

Good Morning Chairperson Nadeau, Councilmembers, Agency Leaders, and members of the community. My name is Christopher Nace, I serve as the Special Education Coordinator for DC International School. I come to you, on behalf of DCI, to express thoughts about our experience and to share some ideas that we think would improve engagement between Charter Schools and CSFA. I want to commend Director Donald, as she has been extremely responsive and helpful. Unfortunately, that has not been our experience, universally.

We hope to convey two messages today: We believe it's the responsibility of CFSA to uphold their mission to provide safety and wellbeing to all children and families in need. We believe this means completing full and appropriate assessments to make sure that children and families are safe.

We also hope to convey that we need much more effective collaboration across city systems so that every adult involved in a child's life can respond to their needs. That's everyone's responsibility, not just CFSA. The complexity of systems is so grand, but we know intergovernmental collaboration is key. We believe that CFSA needs to take a preventative lens towards intervening early with families, utilizing all systems needed to give support and care.

[We have two specific incidents that we have highlighted in our testimony. But for the sake of time, we will focus specifically on recommendations to improve collaboration. We share those incidents in our written testimony.]

Through this statement, we list two instances when our school staff referred students with high needs to CFSA. The school social worker and many other school staff have had some major concerns regarding the wellbeing, safety, and behavior of a student since she started at our school in 6th grade. However, this school year her behaviors and comments have escalated significantly and there are clear indications of trauma that have caused school staff to call CFSA. Since the beginning of this school year, there have been 6 reports to CFSA, on 9/24/2019, 9/25/2019, 9/26/2019, 10/9/2019, 12/6/2019, and 1/15/2020. The concerns in the reports ranged from sexual assault accusations, sexualized language and behaviors towards staff and peers, the student stating fear of being in their father's care due to physical abuse, educational neglect, and child stating fear of reporting abuse because they were told by their parents they would be arrested. On January 15, 2020, a school staff member called and expressed specific concerns for sex trafficking. The assigned worker, Hannah, followed up with the required questions when sex trafficking is mentioned and the answer was "yes" to all except one question. The student displays every single sign of sex trafficking that was discussed when the Office of the Attorney General came to our school to provide more information about this epidemic. After the presentation, multiple school staff members approached the Assistant Attorney General, Rashida Wilson Prioleau, to express concerns about this student and she also expressed concern. This student's name had not come across her desk once, even though there have been specific concerns of sex trafficking. Although CFSA may not investigate a case just because there is a concern for sex trafficking, she stated that she is supposed to be notified of every concern that CFSA gets, and she had not been about this student. Only once Ms. Prioleau contacted CFSA to tell them this case needed to be screened in was an investigation opened and had CFSA follow up. However, it has now been over a week since anyone has seen the student, including CFSA and MPD and there is no urgent follow up happening. We need more transparency from CFSA and collaboration to support our students.

Between 2016-2020, our school counselors, social workers and other school staff have reported concerns about a family 11 times - 10/24/2016, 6/4/2018, 5/13/2019 (twice the same day), 8/9/2019, 10/31/2019, 12/10/2019, 1/11/2020, 1/12/2020, 1/14/2020 and 2/5/2020. We shared concerns from witnessing domestic violence between parents, leaving children home alone all night, alcohol and drug abuse in the home, including driving students to school intoxicated, potential drug distribution, physical fights between parents and children that left bruises, fights where items were thrown at the students and weapons were drawn, and emotional fights where students were kicked out of their home and verbally abused. There was CFSA follow-up each time, but no change occurred in the family dynamics for years. We knew our students weren't safe based on a number of factors. It wasn't until December, when Mr. Chris Nace reached out to the Director and Chief of Staff that focus shifted onto the family once again. The CFSA worker assigned to the case spoke with stakeholders at the school and asked us: "What is it you want us to do?" This question cannot be the response of CFSA.

**We know, from our clinical training around abuse and neglect prevention that part of the definition of child neglect/abuse is a *preponderance* of incidents that have occurred in combination.** This serves to acknowledge familial patterns over a period of time and understand home dynamics based on that pattern. This also means that part of what is lost amidst the ongoing reporting process is our students' ongoing traumatization. **Our trauma-informed practice means we view each family incident within an overall assessment. And the incidents happening at home and through the process of CFSA involvement (the cycle of report and investigate multiple times across years) mean ongoing trauma is occurring.** We know that every time we reported suspicion of abuse or neglect, our students experienced repeated trauma, more instability, and a future that's unknown. This is unsettling for our students, families and communities and it's unsafe for children both physically and emotionally. **For their wellbeing, we know this cycle is problematic.**

**We hope that CFSA can take a preventative lens in the future, acknowledging that intervening early and with a trauma-informed approach can lead to better outcomes for families. CFSA needs a child abuse and neglect prevention team, so there can be greater collaboration amongst systems that can effectively respond to children and families. There should be collaboration between schools, community partners, within the legal and housing systems. And this is because we understand how complex these issues are and by not acknowledging that complexity, we face constant dilemmas within our school-based counseling.**

**We also want to recommend that there be regular, systematic, check ins with CFSA and the LEAs in schools; we need to do more education on both sides of the aisle and more conversation about our concerns so that we better respond to our students. Additionally, We're hoping for more inter-agency tasks forces to include Charter Schools. We understand that Charter Schools don't have the same apparatus that agencies do, but feel that on some level there needs to be continuous engagement to be preventative and productive to better serve all students within the LEA.**



Patricia Sullivan

Testimony before the Committee on the Human Services

**Re: CSC Testimony for CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing – February 12, 2020**

Good Morning, Chairman, Councilmembers and Members of the Committee,

My name is Patricia Sullivan. I am testifying today on behalf of Child and Family Services (CFSA). I am the Program Manager for Family Services at Collaborative Solutions for Communities. I've been working with CSC for over 20 years. In my time here I have had the opportunity to work in different roles, all in which the priority of the clients has driven the organization to do more for the families and the community. As a grantee we are able to serve not only clients that have been referred by CFSA and they are referred to CSC under the Front Porch target population. We also are able to serve families in our communities who seek services when they know that they are in need of support. These

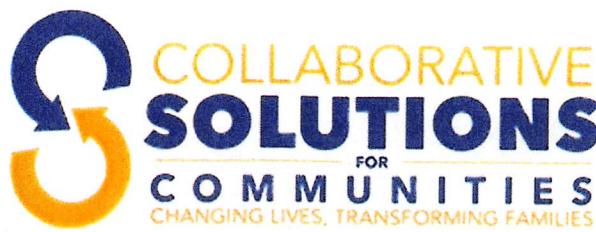


families are served under the Front Yard targeted population.

CSC is driven to support families in reducing risk factors so that they can stay united and children can remain in the comfort of their home. CSC has worked with the community to promote change and safety by improving communication between community resources and community members. This is made possible because of being a grantee of the Child and Family Service. Today you will hear testimonies from 3 of CSC's current and past clients that received services under the Front Yard target population.

Thank you





Dashona Bland  
Public Witness/ Consumer  
Testimony before the Committee on the Human Services

**Re: CSC Testimony for CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing – February 12, 2020**

Good Morning, Chairman, Councilmembers and Members of the  
Committee,

My name is Dashona Bland. I have been a client with Collaborative Solutions for Communities (CSC) since July 2019. I had been referred for Parenting classes. At first, I thought “I don’t have time for that” because they would only judge me on my parenting ways. But every Saturday I showed up for class and through the class, I learned the different styles of parenting and it also helped me to become more aware of my child’s needs and I learned to be more patient with my child and myself. After I graduated from the parenting class, I continued with case management support that was offered. At the time, my son was not in daycare and I did not have a job, so we created a plan that outlined goals I would like to achieve. My Family Preservation Specialist was consistent—she did not give up on me. There were times I felt depressed and moody, but my worker and her team of support continued to motivate me and have always been very supportive. I became very





frustrated and overwhelmed with the process of obtaining the voucher for my son into daycare and even, my worker Ms. Chavarria still stuck by my side and walked me through the process by going with me to each appointment. Now, my son is in daycare, and I can focus on my goal of obtaining employment as a Security Officer. Using the other resources that Collaborative Solutions for Communities offers I am applying for jobs and preparing for interviews.

My experience with Collaborative Solutions for Communities has been a great one. I would recommend Collaborative Solutions for Communities to others because the staff are consistent, patient and very supportive. The staff is friendly, and the office is not hard to find. They have literally been a critical part of keeping my family going with their host of services. They are a strong force in the DC community. They make me feel like family. During the holiday season, I was even invited to their family event "Cookies with Santa" where I met with the Director Ms. Penny Griffith who was also friendly and very encouraging. Thank you to CSC who have been a part of my journey and for believing in me.



Sthefany Pena  
Public Witness/ Consumer  
Testimony before the Committee on Human Services

**Re: CSC Testimony for CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing – February 12, 2020**

Good morning, Chairman and members of the panel.

My name is Sthefany Pena. I believe that Collaborative Solution for Communities being involved with families within the communities is a blessing. It has been a blessing to me because CSC and its hard-working employees really showed that they cared when it came to me and my family. I first entered CSC as a SYEP employee in where, we helped around the office with job tasks. I would always see people of different cultures, in and out of the building, employees working around the clock, but I truly never understood why until myself and my family were on the receiving side. That summer my family went through a rough situation. With my father being an alcoholic, my mother was working two jobs, she was barely home and bringing food from the trash where she worked as a server at banquets to feed the family. Eventually, we were sent to court for not paying rent because my father would spend all of his money on himself and leave us hanging. I remember getting ready to

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go to my job site one morning and opening up the door to US Marshall who had come to the door with an eviction notice. I remember calling my mom and letting her know, she told me it would all be ok. I went ahead and went about my day at the CSC office , Ms. Quick who was the housing person at the time she had asked me what was going on because she overheard me talking about it with someone. That was the beginning with my involvement with CSC. My mother had an intake done that same day.

After that we still eventually had got evicted and were all cramped up in a small room until our apartment was complete. CSC moved heaven and earth to make sure we had a place to go to within a short time frame. That's when we got involved with the CFSA program , they helped my mother with food , school supplies, whatever we needed and more importantly, helped keep my family together.

Years passed and I got older I started to make pretty stupid decisions, and there again came CSC's involvement with our family. I remember our case worker Ms. Bullock and Jazmin showing up at my school to make sure I would attend school. Ms. Bullock would come visit our home and assisted our needs. It was on one specific occasion I remember Ms. Penny, our Executive Director, personally came into our

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home and had a word with us regarding our issues and tried to find a solution and to again help keep my family together.

Time passed again and I became a mother myself. Immediately, I went to CSC again for help. At the time I was assisted and was a client of the CFSA program. I was homeless basically getting kicked out of my grandmother's house multiple times, sleeping in my car, and moving from couch to couch. But CSC was the one place where I felt safe, where I wasn't judged. My caseworker pushed me and eventually pushed me out my comfort zone and had me back on my feet in no time. I believe if it wasn't for CSC I honestly don't know where I would be. Especially the Family Services program they are very committed in helping people like me to avoid having their kids in the systems. I remember multiple times I would cry to my caseworker on how I was scared on going to ask for help because I was scared, I would get social services called on me. CSC made me feel safe and made sure I had accomplished my goals. CSC made my family and the family that I created feel like a priority by meeting us where we were and creating diverse solutions for several of our needs when we felt there was no one else to turn to. Thank you for allowing me to testify.

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Testimony of  
Brandon Rapp  
Foster Youth  
Public Witness

2020 Performance Oversight Child and Family Services Agency, CFSA  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on Human Services  
Brienne Nadeau, Chair

February 12, 2020  
Wilson Building Room 500  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, DC, 20004  
11:00 am

Good morning Councilmember Nadeau and members of the committee, and thank you for allowing me the time today to provide testimony.

My name is Brandon Rapp and I am from Washington, DC. I am a youth who has grown up within the foster care system. I have been with my current foster parents for a while now and together we have achieved permanency. I am doing well as I move into adulthood. I graduated from high school last spring and I am currently taking college classes. My personal mission is to succeed and to be happy while succeeding.

My experiences as a foster child with NCCF have been overwhelmingly positive and the resources that were made available to me have helped me move forward into adulthood. OYE has helped me with applying to schools and funding. I really value the connections I have made with other adults like the social workers in my focus group – Ms. Mimi, Mr. Allen, and Mr. Sykes. I appreciate all the opportunities that brought me to the place I am at now. I have learned about life and how things work. These connections have helped me to know and understand how I can accomplish the things I want out of life. Dr. Chapman's youth council has been an important tool for me to learn about advocating for myself and other. This is the second time I have testified in front of the council and this experience with advocacy is something I am very proud of and will serve me throughout my life.

What I most want this committee to know about me and my experiences is that my journey is not complete. I am looking forward to what the future holds for me and I will work hard to achieve it. But my biological mother is still out there homeless – she needs medical and mental health assistance. I as soon as I am able to do so I would like to help care for her, but people in my mother's position rely on programs to help care for them. I would like the committee to remember that foster children have biological families who need assistance programs as do

foster families and I want to continue to advocate for foster children, foster families, and biological families as I pursue my own personal goals.

Thank you again for your time and attention.



Rahketa Steele  
Public Witness/ Consumer

Testimony before the Committee on the Human Services

**Re: CSC Testimony for CFSA Performance Oversight Hearing – February 12, 2020**

Good Morning, Chairman, Councilmembers and Members of the  
Committee,

My name is Rahketa Steele. I have been a client with Collaborative Solutions for Communities (CSC) since October 2019. At that time, I was 8 months pregnant and homeless. I needed food assistance and wanted to be connected for services for my unborn child. My case worker Ms. Butler was able provide me with an emergency food voucher. With the voucher I was able to make sure that I had the proper nutrition during my pregnancy. Then she connected me with additional community resources for food assistance. After giving birth to my son, I went through a stage of postpartum depression. My son stayed up at night and I couldn't get any sleep. My worker coached me to reached out to my friends so that they could support me by watching my son so that I could get some rest. I was pleased to work with Ms. Butler because she was always consistent, supportive and present regardless of



what ever I was going through. I am thankful for Collaborative Solutions for Communities for showing me that there is support in the communities that I can always tap into when a need arise. If CSC was not in the community and a partner of Child and Family Services, I would not have benefited from their preventive services.



My name is Julia Tutt. I am a grandparent caregiver and I live in Washington Highlands in Ward 8. I have a 16 year old daughter and I also take care of my 8 year old granddaughter. I have had my granddaughter since she was 4 years old. I pay for the roof over her head, her uniforms and other clothes, her food, her transportation, and her activities. I even rent a washing machine to wash all our clothes.

I am on SSI but it is not enough to support all 3 of us and it is hard to pay for everything my granddaughter needs. I applied for the grandparent caregiver subsidy last fall. I haven't heard anything back yet. I have heard there is a long waiting list to get the subsidy now. Grandparent caregivers need help so please give more money to the Grandparent Caregiver Program so I can get help to raise my granddaughter.

Thank you for listening to what I have to say.



Testimony of  
Dr. Sheryl Brissett Chapman  
Executive Director  
The National Center for Children and Family (NCCF)

2020 Performance Oversight Child and Family Services Agency, CFSA  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on Human Services  
Brienne Nadeau, Chair

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Maryland Nonprofit

Maryland Association of Resources  
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Alliance for Strong Families and  
Communities

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February 12, 2020

Wilson Building Room 500

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, DC, 20004

11:00 am

Good morning, Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Dr. Sheryl Brissett Chapman, and I am the Executive Director of The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF). It is my privilege to come before you again regarding the oversight of NCCF's private provider partnership with the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) of the District of Columbia.

NCCF was incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1915 as an orphanage for 14 boys. Over 100 years later, we have evolved into a multi-faceted, nationally accredited non-profit organization that propels total, healthy living environments for over 50,000 vulnerable youth and families in the D.C. metropolitan region. Through a continuum of more than 20 community based programs, we focus on abuse and neglect, homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, education and workforce development, youth development, and related prevention efforts. NCCF has provided traditional, therapeutic, and specialized foster care services to thousands of the District's children placed in out of home care who have been in need of safety, well-being, and family permanency, for over 20 years.

After what we recognize as a challenging first year, we are very pleased to report that NCCF had an incredibly successful second year with our partners at CFSA delivering the Temporary Safe Haven contract. We work regularly and collaboratively as you can see from the attached charts, that reflect the 16 on-going and task focused joint meetings we hold ranging from leadership, placement, licensing, and data tracking. (*See attached: NCCF and CFSA Joint Meeting Table*). NCCF has made it our priority to strengthen and grow our capacity to serve this city, and we have incorporated the feedback of all our stakeholders in order to make this possible. I would like to document some of our accomplishments for this committee and commend my staff for their work to meet and oftentimes exceed the expectations of our partners and this committee.

NCCF's Quality Improvement and Contract Compliance Department (QICC) is a team of unparalleled professionals responsible for the effective implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan. The QICC team utilizes qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to monitor performance. Contract and Benchmark performance data is collected and reviewed by QICC staff on a daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly basis. Contract and Benchmark performance are reviewed weekly in NCCF's Temporary Safe Haven Leadership meeting.

[www.nccf-cares.org](http://www.nccf-cares.org)

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QICC conducts client record reviews, extracts electronic documentation, analyzes process and outcome data, and synthesizes performance results for review and evaluation.

QICC regularly reviews performance data to identify noncompliance and/or deficiencies, develop time-specific corrective action plan and assess improvement on identified areas or noncompliance/deficiency as applicable. NCCF utilizes data generated from performance reports to inform agency practices, decision-making and practice innovations designed to improve outcomes and services for children and families served.

During the inception of this contract, initially there was not clarity or agreement on what constituted an over placed home per Office of License Monitoring (OLM) of Maryland for the CFSA contract. I am pleased to report that as of today NCCF is in compliance with both the CFSA contract and COMAR as exception packets have been submitted for approval to SSA office.

NCCF has turned its attention to the care and nurturing of foster parents as well as the children in our care. We have launched a monthly newsletter for our foster parents featuring important announcements, resources, shout-outs, recipes, communication tips, and event re-caps. Our newsletter enjoys a 50% read rate among recipients. We have also increased the number of thank you messages, and announcements regarding stipend early deposit dates. Our Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet featured videos of our award winners and was very well attended and received by the foster parents. NCCF has hosted multiple mixers and training events in addition to our popular and highly anticipated Crab Feast and Holiday Party for foster families. *(See attached: Recent sample of monthly newsletter).*

Along with NCCF's significant accomplishments, and the growth and expansion of our services, NCCF has worked to streamline operations and ensure that we have the capacity to remain a nimble agency that reacts to the needs of the children and families in our care. I would like to take some time to address the general profile of children who are entering our system as well as corrective actions, and new program initiatives NCCF has undertaken to ensure that the best care imaginable is available for every child, and the foster families under our umbrella are supported by the agency to achieve that level of care.

Children who frequently disrupt from NCCF foster homes are in the late childhood (ages 9 - 12) stage. They often present with severe emotional, behavioral, and/or cognitive challenges that are overwhelming for foster parents to manage. These trauma responses often interfere with the Foster Parent's natural family and/or professional life. Several children placed in NCCF foster homes who have frequently disrupted have experienced multiple hospitalizations and mental health disorders including: anxiety disorder, depression disorder, bipolar disorder, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (DMDD) conduct disorder (DC) oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and reactive attachment disorder (RAD). NCCF has worked closely with our foster parent partners and CFSA to ensure that they children are able to find some measure of peace and stability despite the significant challenges presented by children who have had experiences that no child should have to face.

NCCF is also working to improve our process for ensuring valid licenses for all foster parent partner families. The leading reason for suspended and unlicensed homes was previously due to outstanding MD CPS clearances (late submissions, as the MD clearance results take an average of 45 days to be issued to the Licensing Team and the forms need to be submitted 90 days prior to the clearance expiring). I am pleased to share that the Licensing Team has improved, overall, in requesting MD CPS clearances earlier; thus, the current prevailing reasons for suspended and unlicensed homes has shifted from expired MD CPS clearances to outstanding medical documentation (for suspended homes) and outstanding training hours (for unlicensed homes).

Currently, our Licensing Specialists initiate communication for re-licensure efforts 90 days before a foster parent's license expires outlining the documentation needed to update their license. At that time, if a parent has less than 10 in-service hours completed, the parent will be referred to the Foster Parent Recruitment and Training Team so

that the Recruitment and Training Team can assist in developing the parent's Training Plan. Licensing Supervisors again review files 30 days prior to the foster parent's license expiration date to ensure the home is on track to be licensed timely.

Also, now that a Quality Improvement Specialist for the Foster Parent Licensing Team has been added to the Program, the Licensing Supervisors will have more time to focus on ensuring that staff are meeting deadlines and providing support, when needed.

In addition to the above, NCCF has invested significant resources on ensure we meet our permanency goals.

- ✓ NCCF received a CFSA CQI report regarding Permanency achievement. NCCF was responsible for 137 exits out of 367 (32%) in FY19, with a positive permanency rate of 93%.
- ✓ NCCF Clinical Supervisors, Program Directors and QI team were trained on February 5, 2020, in the new Permanency Tracker which is designed to monitor timelines for permanency. achievement and impact the permanency rate in order to achieve the Lashawn Permanency benchmark.
- ✓ NCCF participates in monthly Permanency Goal Review Meeting (PGRM) with CFSA. The purpose is to monitor progress towards timely permanency to ensure we are maximizing efforts to reunify, adopt, or find permanency through guardianship.

NCCF has also implemented the following strategies to achieve placement stabilization:

- ✓ Placement Stability Meetings (PSM)s uses a strength-based model and are intended to address placement concerns to prevent disruption. PSM participants include but is not limited to the resource parent(s), the foster child's network, social worker, NCCF parent resource staff, NCCF placement team, NCCF licensing team, and when clinically and/or developmentally appropriate the youth is able to participate. If a placement is not salvageable, the resource parent provide insight that could be helpful for future placements.
- ✓ Assignment of a behavioral specialist for children ages 0 - 13 years who frequently exhibit maladaptive behaviors in the foster home; the behavioral specialist works closely with the foster children and resource parent(s) to encourage positive behaviors and promote placement stability.
- ✓ Facilitation of "meet and greets", when appropriate, between the resource family and youth; this allows the foster child and resource parent the opportunity to acclimate themselves with each other prior to solidifying the placement.
- ✓ Assignment of specialized outreach workers for youth, ages 14 - 21 years, to assist with placement stability as well as to support their transition to adulthood by teaching life skills, social skills, problem-solving techniques, and volition.
- ✓ Implementation of foster parent coaches who provide additional supports to foster parents with placement challenges have experienced high levels of placement disruptions due to maladaptive behaviors. Foster parent coaches address issues such as problems with transitions into homes, routines, power struggles, parental anger, discipline, homework challenges, chores, cyber safety, and disrespectful behavior.
- ✓ Implementation of resource parent evaluations to assess the effectiveness of care provision and address resource parents' needs.

NCCF's latest innovations take the form of two new program initiatives – our Foster Parent Coach Academy and NCCF's KinNetwork.

The Foster Parent Coach Academy promotes the stability and well-being of children by supporting foster parents in meeting the unique needs of children in their home while providing comprehensive supportive services for agency foster parents to build and sustain a healthy living environment for children and youth in foster care.

The Foster Parent Coach Academy's key principle is to provide foster parents with tools and strategies that are designed to assist in building therapeutic relationships and promote the importance of managing one's own stress



by taking time on a routine basis for self-care. Based on experience, we recognize that this is important for placement stability and minimizing any avoidable placement disruptions. Utilizing trauma-informed, strengths based coaching, foster parents will better understand the needs of children in foster care and the impact of trauma on their behaviors. Foster parents will be educated on specific relationships between unwanted child behaviors and the child's non verbalized and unexpressed feelings. Once those relationships are understood, parents will learn how to approach the child in a way that heals them, rather than re-traumatizes them. Foster parent coaching is not therapy, rather it is focused on supporting the foster parent and providing the tools needed to successfully support and provide stability to their foster child. Coaching is delivered only to the foster parents, not directly to the youth or in the presence of the youth. Coaches help foster parents identify their own, effective solutions to the challenges they face.

The NCCF KinNetwork program supports the initiative to organize relative family supports, develop a caring network of the respective relatives for youth in foster care that reside in NCCF foster homes, and place youth with their kin family permanently. The primary goal of the KinNetwork program is to increase the number of children placed with kin and confirm healthy and effective extended family and community supports are in place to ensure the child achieves permanency. Our experience to date is that this increasing group require culturally specific competencies and support from our staff, which supports the highly valued maintenance of these children within their natural family systems.

As we continue to move forward with our partnership with CFSA, I look forward to furthering NCCF's mission to provide total, whole, and healthy childhood experiences for foster children in the District and continuing to provide the excellent quality services that you have come to expect from NCCF. At this time, I welcome your questions, comments, and feedback and thank you again for your time and attention.

NCCF and CFSA Joint Meetings	
Meeting Title	Participants (* = NCCF Lead)
1. Executive Leadership (ongoing)	NCCF Executive Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Chapman*</li> <li>• Ralph Belk</li> <li>• Mohammed Doka</li> <li>• Nadezda Henderson</li> </ul>
2. Joint Management (ongoing)	NCCF Executive Team and IFC Program Directors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ralph Belk*</li> <li>• Nadezda Henderson</li> <li>• Krystal Holland</li> <li>• Jasilyn Morgan</li> <li>• Claire Wigglesworth</li> <li>• Janelle Witcher</li> </ul>
3. Permanency Case Planning Committee (ongoing)	IFC Program Directors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Janelle Witcher*</li> <li>• Claire Wigglesworth</li> </ul>
4. National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Survey Task Group (one time meeting on agenda)	Quality Improvement Team and Foster Care and Adoption Administrator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jasilyn Morgan*</li> <li>• Nadezda Henderson</li> <li>• Bruce Tyson</li> <li>• Keena Brock</li> </ul>
5. Determination of Intensive Needs and Services (DINS) Committee (ongoing)	Foster Care and Adoption Administrator, Program Directors, and Clinical Supervisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nadezda Henderson</li> <li>• Claire Wigglesworth*</li> <li>• Janelle Witcher</li> <li>• IFC Clinical Supervisors (as needed)</li> </ul>
6. Fatality Review Committee (ongoing)	Foster Care and Adoption Administrator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Sheryl Chapman</li> <li>• Nadezda Henderson*</li> </ul>
7. Permanency Mediation Work Group (one time meeting on agenda)	IFC Clinical Supervisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tymel Cason*</li> <li>• Paula Sherman</li> </ul>
8. Permanency Tracking (ongoing)	Quality Improvement Team, IFC Program Directors, and IFC Clinical Supervisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bruce Tyson*</li> <li>• Nadezda Henderson</li> <li>• Claire Wigglesworth</li> <li>• Janelle Witcher</li> <li>• Keena Brock</li> <li>• Rebecca Eskow</li> <li>• Brittany Livingston</li> <li>• Mary Gordon</li> <li>• Paula Sherman</li> <li>• Endia Hardy</li> <li>• Tymel Cason</li> <li>• Alyssa Cartledge</li> <li>• Nikiana Dorsey</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natalie Sidbury</li> </ul>
9. Youth Bill of Rights (YBR) Task Force (3 day meeting on agenda)	Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keena Brock*</li> </ul>
10. Needs Assessment Task Force (2 day meeting on agenda)	Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bruce Tyson*</li> <li>Keena Brock</li> </ul>
11. Microsoft Excel Tools Data Tracking (one day meeting on agenda)	Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keena Brock*</li> </ul>
12. Licensing Team Committee (ongoing)	Foster Parent Licensing Team and Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharifa Bennett*</li> <li>Hope Elliot</li> <li>Bruce Tyson</li> <li>Rebecca Eskow</li> </ul>
13. Information System Redesign (TBA)	Foster Care and Adoption Administrator, IFC Program Directors, and Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nadezda Henderson*</li> <li>Claire Wigglesworth</li> <li>Janelle Witcher</li> <li>Bruce Tyson</li> <li>Keena Brock</li> <li>Rebecca Eskow</li> <li>Thomas Bennett</li> </ul>
14. State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) Workgroup (TBA)	Foster Care and Adoption Administrator, IFC Program Directors, and Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nadezda Henderson*</li> <li>Claire Wigglesworth</li> <li>Janelle Witcher</li> <li>Bruce Tyson</li> <li>Keena Brock</li> <li>Rebecca Eskow</li> <li>Thomas Bennett</li> </ul>
15. Placement Process Stakeholder Feedback (ongoing)	Foster Care and Adoption Administrator, IFC Program Directors, Placement Team, and Quality Improvement Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nadezda Henderson</li> <li>Claire Wigglesworth</li> <li>Janelle Witcher</li> <li>De'Jae Hayward*</li> <li>Kameko Johnson-Styles</li> <li>Bruce Tyson</li> <li>Thomas Bennett</li> <li>Rebecca Eskow</li> </ul>
16. Parent Advisory Council (PAC) (ongoing)	Recruitment and Training Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tonya Sherman*</li> </ul>



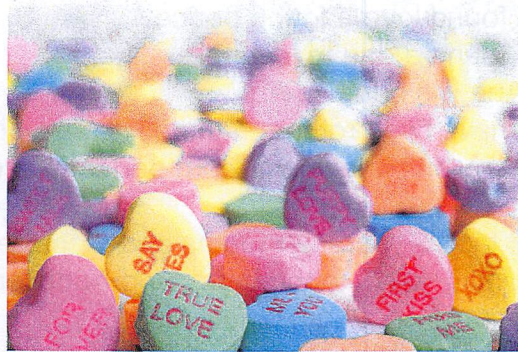


## NCCF FOSTER PARENT INFORMER

### Happy Valentine's Day

**This is the day we show the love that we feel in our hearts all year long.**

Nasir Griffin expressed the love he feels for his father in the written word, and shared it with us in the award winning poem below. We wish the same kind of love to all our foster parent partners each and every day and hope you all know how special you are to NCCF!



### Adopted Youth Wins Award for Poetry

**Congratulations to Nasir Griffin**, who won a writing competition at school for this raw, moving, and beautiful poem about his journey to family. Nasir was adopted this past November at the District of Columbia Adoption Day Event by Dr. Arif Vega.

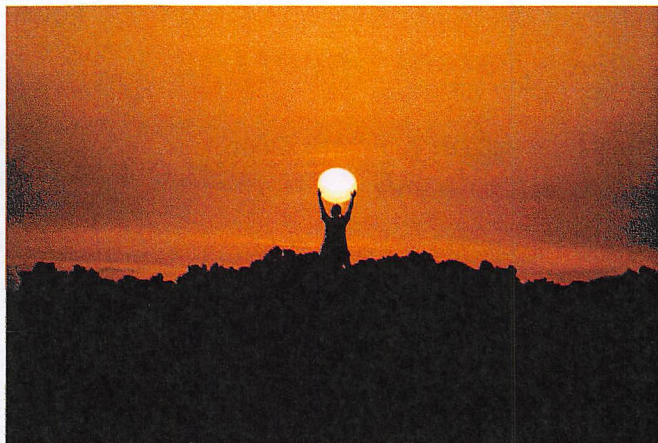
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### Things I Learned The Hard Way by Nasir Sadiq Raji Griffin

Friends are important we  
need someone to talk to  
Someone to protect us in all  
that we do  
I learned things the hard  
way, yes, this is true  
Do unto others as you would  
have them do unto you.

Family first before anything  
else,  
yes that's what they say  
But it's not always that way  
I've seen people come and go, in and out they sway  
Those that birthed me couldn't even stay

Life is hard, but there is always a new day  
Let me tell you myself, things I learned the hard way.





There are people who love you  
People who care  
Even though they don't look like you or have the same color hair  
They may be tall, short, Maybe skinny or stout  
But I think we all know that's not what's it's really about.

It's about love and safety, kindness and care  
It's about finally realizing that life can be fair

I found hope, I found fun  
On a rainy day found the sun  
I found family, I found joy  
I found love, I found peace  
I found a dad to love me  
And His name is Arif  
I have two brothers named Kai and Chase  
I couldn't imagine a more perfect place

It took 3 years, 2 months and 11 more days  
Until finally I found them, and Adoption was the way  
I am strong, I am black  
I am intelligent these are facts  
as hard as it is  
I refuse to look back

if there's one thing I learned, it's the bitter truth  
Know your own worth in all that you do  
Don't be afraid to let people in  
You never know what may come of a new friend

Now my Dad is my everything  
Just don't have enough time to say  
So I guess I'll just tell you  
What I've learned the hard way.

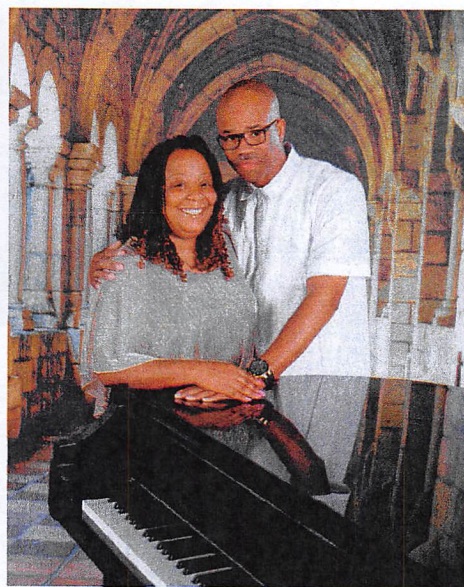
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## Foster Parent Shout Out

### Toya Thompson & Frank Green, Upper Marlboro, MD

We are highlighting Toya Thompson and Frank Green because they demonstrate exemplary team-work. They are flexible and accommodating to the youths' needs and always go above and beyond to meet the needs of the children in their care. They serve as exceptional guides to teen parents in particular, as Ms. Thompson herself was a teen parent.

Ms. Thompson & Mr. Green began their fostering journey in 1994 when a co-worker asked them to temporarily take in a toddler





child on their behalf. They became licensed as respite foster parents solely for that child. Once the child returned to her parents six months later, they went on to continue to foster other children and eventually went on to adopt four children throughout their years. They transitioned to NCCF in 2018. They enjoy working with NCCF's Social Workers and their time with the agency has been a positive experience.

This couple has fostered a variety of ages of children in care throughout the years but they are currently committed to fostering teenage parents because Ms. Thompson believes that her personal experiences as a teen mother allowed her to be a positive guidance to teen mothers.

Ms. Thompson is an advocate in the community for people who are interested in fostering but points out that "it is important for other people to know that fostering is not an easy job. " She likes to inform people about the realities of fostering. She says that many people have expressed interest in fostering after observing her because they are intrigued by the "cuteness" of the children but she always uses that opportunity to provide an education on the hard but rewarding work that fostering represents. Additionally, she highlights the expectation of shared parenting as she is very supportive of that element of the job. Thank you, Ms. Thompson & Mr. Green, for all that you do! We are so glad you are a part of the NCCF team!

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## Child Care Tips for Foster Parents

### I have a youth that needs childcare, what do I do?

- First thing you need to do is **identify any licensed childcare center** that has space for your child and is convenient for you to transport your child to and from daily.
- Ensure the childcare center is comfortable getting paid a month behind. *For example*, if the child attends a childcare center during the month of May, the childcare center will receive an invoice at the end of May and be paid by the end of June.
- Let your NCCF social worker know the childcare center you have identified, the child's start date, and whether or not your child will be attending full day, part time, or before and after care.



### How does the payment work?

- Once the childcare center information is provided to NCCF, the social worker will then input the information in the data system in order to generate invoices for payment.
- At the end of the month CFSA will send an invoice directly to the childcare center. An employee at the childcare center will fill out the invoice and send it back to CFSA. CFSA will then process the payment and pay the childcare center directly.
- Payments are sent to the childcare center a month after attendance.
- CFSA will only pay the childcare center for dates the child actually attended.

### FAQs

**Q:** Will NCCF transport my youth to and from their childcare center?



**A:** No. Please make sure the childcare center you identify is convenient for you to provide daily transportation.

**Q:** Can CFSA pay the childcare centers upfront?

**A:** Unfortunately, CFSA cannot pay the childcare centers upfront.

**Q:** Does CFSA pay childcare registration fees?

**A:** No, CFSA will not pay registration fees. They will only pay daily childcare rates.

**Q:** The childcare center I've selected has never worked with CFSA before, what do they need to provide to the NCCF social worker to ensure their payment is processed?

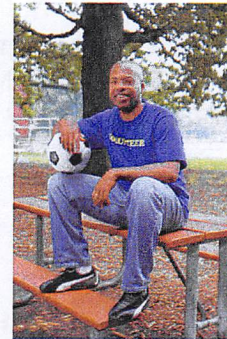
**A:** A W-9 and an active childcare license.

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## Prince George's Summer Youth Employment

**Download the flyer** for the Prince George's County Summer Youth Employment Program. The application window is from January 6<sup>th</sup> to February 28, 2020. Youth may work between June 29-Aug.7, 2020 and earn up to \$9.80/hr (ages 14-17) or \$11.50/hr (ages 18-22).

To apply online youth can visit: [www.youthatwork.mypgc.us](http://www.youthatwork.mypgc.us) or for more info email or call [syep@co.pg.md.us](mailto:syep@co.pg.md.us) or 301-883-6200



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## Family & Youth Initiative

**DC Family and Youth Initiative** is an organization in DC that exclusively focuses on helping teens, ages 12-18, in foster care make lifelong connections with adults. They pair teens with host parents or mentors. Host Parents are individuals or families that "welcome a teen in foster care into their home for a series of weekend visits (at least two weekends a month for four months). Host parenting provides teens with intensive mentoring and new perspectives on adult life." Mentors focus on "exposing teens to new experiences and opportunities. They become trusted friends." If a foster parent is interested in learning more about the program, please visit the website [www.dcfyi.org](http://www.dcfyi.org) To refer a teen, contact your social worker.



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## Family Style Chicken Spaghetti

### INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces uncooked whole-wheat spaghetti
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 pt. cherry tomatoes
- 1 medium onion, cut into 1-in. wedges



- 1/4 cup fresh basil leaves, divided
- 2 tablespoons unsalted tomato paste
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 8 ounces shredded skinless, boneless rotisserie chicken breast (about 2 cups)
- 3 tablespoons shaved Parmesan cheese



### **DIRECTIONS**

1. Preheat broiler. Line a jelly-roll pan with foil.
2. Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting salt and fat.
3. While pasta cooks, combine oil, garlic, tomatoes, and onion on prepared pan; toss. Broil 4 to 6 minutes. Transfer mixture and any liquid from pan to a blender. Add 2 tablespoons basil and tomato paste; secure blender lid on blender. Remove center piece of blender lid; cover with a kitchen towel. Blend until smooth.
4. Drain pasta; return to pan. Stir in tomato sauce, salt, pepper, and chicken. Cook over medium heat until heated. Place spaghetti mixture on a serving platter. Chop remaining 2 tablespoons basil leaves. Sprinkle basil and Parmesan evenly over spaghetti.

### **NOTES**

A family-style dinner that can be prepared together and promote quality time amid a busy day or week! Cooking together is a good way to engage and have conversations with family members, particularly foster youth who may find it difficult.

## **Cultural and Family Events in the DMV this Month**

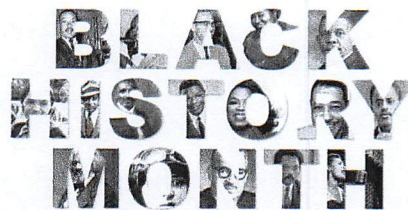
### **Black History Month Paint Night**

**February 8, 2020**

**Hilton Garden Inn - Waldorf**

Celebrate Black History 365 with this paint night event. Whether you come by yourself, with a group of friends, or make it a date night, expect to have some fun

as artist Justin Q Young will be guiding you on your masterpiece. All supplies included Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-history-month-paint-night-waldorf-tickets-88140680147> for more information.



### **African American Journey through Fiber Arts: Opening Reception**

**February 8, 2020**

**Montpelier Arts Center**

Celebrate Black History Month by witnessing the stories and experiences of African American lives. This exhibition culminates from a national call for fiber arts that include quilts, felt, sewing, and beading Visit

<https://culturecapital.com/event/72755/african-american-journey-through-fiber-arts-opening-reception> for more information.

### **Rayceen Pendarvis Is Living Black History**

**February 20, 2020**

**Cleveland Park Library**

A special LGBTQ+ inclusive Black History Month event celebrating diversity,



culture, & the arts. Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rayceen-pendarvis-is-living-black-history-tickets-88276674911> for additional information.

### **Voices From The Past**

**February 21, 2020**

#### **Overdue Recognition Art Gallery**

A night of spoken word, poetry, music, and art. For more information visit:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-history-month-voices-from-the-past-tickets-88178898459?utm-medium=discovery&utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&aff=escb&utm-source=cp&utm-term=listing>.

### **Black History Art & Beauty Expo**

**March 29, 2020**

#### **The Arc West Black Box**

Celebrating the black experience year round. For more information visit:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-history-art-beauty-expo-tickets-57515836415>.

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## **Foster Parent Recruitment Mixer: Save the Date!**

**Date: February 15, 2020**

**Time: 3:30 to 6:30 pm**

**Location: 3132 Branch Avenue, Temple Hills, Maryland 20748**

NCCF is recruiting foster parents for older youth, especially teens! Spread the word by inviting a prospective foster parent for a teenager to join you and your foster children at the roller skating rink. Food, drinks, and skate rental are all included. Guests will learn how they can make a difference in the life of a teenager through foster care.



NCCF PRESENTS

LOVE SUPPORT TEENS

FAMILY LGBTQ

**RECRUITING FOSTER PARENTS  
FOR TEENS MIXER**

Bring your teen for an afternoon of skating,  
pizza, and fun!

**BRING A RECRUIT → COMMIT TO  
ATTENDING ORIENTATION → COMPLETE  
TRAINING AND RECEIVE A GIFT**


 Saturday February 15, 2020  
 From 3:30PM – 6:30PM  
 Temple Hills Skate Palace  
 3132 Branch Avenue  
 Temple Hills, MD 20748  
 RSVP: Check your email for  
 Eventbrite link.


 Made with PosterMyWall.com

## Upcoming Training Schedule

Tuesday, February 11, 2020 10:00am-12:00pm

***Training: It's Not What You Say, But How You Say It: Learning How to Communicate (2 hours)***

Participants will learn effective communication skills for supporting children in care which ultimately enhances the young person's capacity to cope at home, in school and in the community.

Trainer: Consultant, Lisa Owens

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: February 9th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,  
jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.



Thursday, February 13, 2020 6:00pm-8:00pm

***Training: Understanding Trauma's Effects (2 hours)***

Participants will become aware of the profound impact trauma has on children's development and functioning. Participants will learn how children of different ages may respond to trauma and strategies for supporting them.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: February 11th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851, [jashford@nccf-cares.org](mailto:jashford@nccf-cares.org)

Childcare not provided.

Thursday, February 20, 2020 10:00am-12:00pm

***Training: Building A Safe Place (2 hours)***

Participants will become familiar with trauma reminders and identify ways they can help children cope with trauma reminders and heal.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: February 18th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851, [jashford@nccf-cares.org](mailto:jashford@nccf-cares.org)

Childcare not provided.

Saturday, February 22, 2020 10:00am-2:00pm

***Training: Parenting a Teen Parent to Greatness (4 hours)***

Participants will learn skills to effectively parent teenagers who are parents themselves, while teaching the young parent to care responsibly for their baby.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: February 20th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851, [jashford@nccf-cares.org](mailto:jashford@nccf-cares.org)

Childcare not provided.

Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:00am-12:00pm

***Training: Dealing with Feelings and Behaviors (2 hours)***

Participants will learn the cognitive triangle and ways to apply it to a child who experienced trauma. Participants will identify strategies to help youth develop healthy emotional skills and positive behaviors.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: February 23rd to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851, [jashford@nccf-cares.org](mailto:jashford@nccf-cares.org)

Childcare not provided.

Thursday, March 5, 2020 6:00pm-8:00pm

***Training: Stewards of Children Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training (2 Hours)***

Participants will learn how to recognize signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse, keys to prevention, and skills to react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

Trainer: Consultant, Safe Shores

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 3rd to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851, [jashford@nccf-cares.org](mailto:jashford@nccf-cares.org)

Childcare not provided.

Saturday, March 7, 2020 10:00am-2:00pm



***Training: Parenting a Teen Parent to Greatness (4 hours)***

Participants will learn skills to effectively parent teenagers who are parents themselves, while teaching the young parent to care responsibly for their baby.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 5th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,

jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

6:00pm-8:00pm

***Training: The Baby Is Here, Now What? (2 hours)***

Participants will learn effective ways to support teen parents, address challenges and concerns teen parents may experience. Participants will gain insight how to support teen parents with caring responsibly for their baby.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 8th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,

jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

Thursday, March 12, 2020 6:00pm-8:00pm

***Training: Connections and Healings (2 hours)***

Participants will learn how trauma can affect children's view of themselves and their future and how to provide support and help children maintain important connections in their lives.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 10th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,

jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

Monday, March 16, 2020 6:00pm-8:00pm

***Training: Separation and Loss (2 hours)***

Participants will discuss the challenges that foster parents face as children in care manage issues of separation and loss and identify strategies that will help them become excellent Loss Managers for the children in their home.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 14th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,

jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

Thursday, March 19, 2020 6:00pm-8:00pm

***Training: Becoming an Advocate (2 hours)***

Participants will learn how to identify basic elements of trauma informed advocacy and will learn how to work effectively with the team of people involved in your child's life.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 17th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,

jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

Wednesday, March 25, 2020 6:00pm-8:00pm



**Training: Promoting Positive Behavior (3 hours)**

Participants will understand the influence of healthy relationship building on promoting positive behavior in children and identify effective discipline techniques to promote positive behavior.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 23rd to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,  
jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

Monday, March 30, 2020 10:00am-12:00pm

**Training: Taking Care of Yourself (2 hours)**

Participants will learn how a child's trauma can affect the caregiver, the warning signs of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress, and how important it is to take care of oneself while fostering.

Trainer: NCCF Foster Parent Trainer, Jasmine Williams Ashford

Location: 6404 Ivy Lane, Greenbelt, MD 20770 Suite 500

RSVP by: March 28th to Jasmine Williams Ashford at 301-875-2851,  
jashford@nccf-cares.org

Childcare not provided.

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## Need to Renew Some Certifications?

Download the forms you need from our new Foster Care Web site and save time!

[Visit the NCCF Website](#)

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National Center for Children & Families | Innovative Family Connections | (657) 522-0770  
| [fostercareinfo@nccf-cares.org](mailto:fostercareinfo@nccf-cares.org) | [www.nccf-cares.org/fostercare/](http://www.nccf-cares.org/fostercare/)

STAY CONNECTED





**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Child and Family Services Agency**



*Performance Oversight Hearing Fiscal Year 2019*  
*Child and Family Services Agency*

Testimony of  
**Brenda Donald**  
Director, Child and Family Services Agency

Before the  
Committee on Human Services  
Brianne Nadeau, Chairperson

February 12, 2020  
11:00 a.m.

Council of the District of Columbia  
Room 500  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20510-6250

Good morning, Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. I am Brenda Donald, Director of the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). I appreciate this opportunity to join you once again to share CFSA's performance over the past year.

In FY2019, CFSA delivered on big promises: planning for and receiving approval on our Federal Title IV-E Prevention Plan under the Family First Prevention Services Act; start-up of Families First DC; reducing the scope of *LaShawn A. v. Bowser*; settling into our new way of providing foster care services under our Temporary Safe Haven Redesign; fully implementing our mental health redesign; and gearing up for our new child welfare information system. As noted in the Children's Bureau's review of the District's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), "it is clear...that the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) continues to be a dynamic, evolving agency that is deeply committed to strengthening child welfare services in the District."

It is important to emphasize that CFSA is recognized around the country as a high-performing agency that other states work to emulate. In the past year, CFSA has hosted half a dozen groups or jurisdictions to share our best practices including Casey Family Programs, delegations from China and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and our federal partners at the Children's Bureau and the White House Policy Council. Our primary tasks in the coming months will be to demonstrate, without a doubt, that we can consistently sustain the progress we have achieved and continue to focus on the quality of our practice.

### **CRITICAL TREND DATA**

The District is continuing our trajectory of reducing the number of children in care by bolstering our prevention services. At the end of FY2019, CFSA was serving 796 children in foster care and 1,357 children In-Home with their families. We saw an increase in the number of reunifications during the fiscal year, from 197 in FY18 to 227 in FY19 and continued to see a decline in the number of youth aging out of care (63 in FY18 to 53 in FY19). These trends are encouraging and show CFSA is making the right investments.

### **LASHAWN A. V. BOWSER**

We also continued our progress in meeting LaShawn measures and were able to successfully negotiate a reduction in the active monitoring of LaShawn from 88 measures to 23 measures. The new Exit and Sustainability Plan (ESP) includes monitoring of investigations, visitation, placement, and permanency. The ESP also includes some specific placement commitments, most of which we have already met. When the Court Monitor releases her report in the beginning of April 2020, we anticipate meeting many of the remaining 23 outcomes to be achieved and are already scheduled for another mediation session with plaintiffs in late March 2020. We hope this moves us toward the final exit from LaShawn.

### **HIGHLIGHTS FROM FY2019**

We entered FY2019 with big plans and are proud to say we not only met but exceeded expectations.

In October 2019, the District became the first jurisdiction in the nation with a federally approved Title IV-E Prevention Plan, allowing us to smoothly transition from the end of our Title IV-E

Waiver Demonstration Project to federal claiming for eligible prevention services under the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First). As the Federal government releases ratings on evidence-based programs and to be responsive to states concerns about the implementation of Family First, the District will continue to lead the nation, modifying our plan as appropriate and advocating for the expansion of this work.

We also used the opportunity of Family First to expand our prevention array and launch Families First DC, a neighborhood-based, whole family approach to provide upstream, primary prevention services and neighborhood driven resources. In December 2019, Mayor Bowser announced the Family Success Center grantees in ten neighborhoods in Wards 7 and 8. For the FY2020 planning phase, each neighborhood will establish a Community Advisory Council which will consist of residents and stakeholders in the targeted community to determine the services offered at the Family Success Centers. This will be accomplished using a family strengthening model to increase protective factors, mitigate trauma, fill in gaps in services, and set families up for successful outcomes. We look forward to the launch of these centers in the beginning of FY2021.

As we settled into our relationship with the National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) as our sole provider for traditional foster care services in Maryland, we continued to work collaboratively to identify gaps in our placement services and to improve the wrap-around services for children in foster care. To this end, we have added a number of specialized placement options to our array in order to meet the ongoing needs of children in care. These include a contract with Children's Choice for intensive foster care, additions to our therapeutic congregate array, and two professional foster homes to assist in observation and assessment of

children. These additional beds provide us with the flexibility we need to ensure that we match children and youth to appropriate placements and to reduce placement disruptions. In addition, after discussions with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), we built an in-house unit for initial mental health services for children entering care. This unit has served 88 children to date and has seen improvements in both speed and consistency of care for children in the initial months after entry.

### **CONTINUING CHALLENGES**

While we are excited about all the achievements, our work is not without its challenges. Even with our expanded placement array, placement stability continues to be an issue for a small group of children and youth. While there's no quick-fix approach to placements, given the complexity of the needs of our children and the inter-relatedness of practice and systems issues, we continue to focus on increasing first placements with kin, evaluating our array to ensure its meeting the needs of our children and youth and stepping up supports to our foster parents.

### **FY2020 Focus**

We are proud of our progress, but we know that much work remains to be done, and there are more benchmarks to be met. Placement stability and the time it takes to move our children to reunification, guardianship, or adoption continue to be a top priority for the agency. CFSA is also committed to continuing our efforts to strengthen and support kin and close relatives who are raising their minor relatives through CFSA's Kinship Navigator Program, the Close Relative Caregiver Program, and the Grandparent Caregiver Program by providing qualified families with subsidies and other support services.

## **Conclusion**

The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (MACCAN) said it best, "CFSA had a transformative year with increased in-house services and planning for prevention and the continued overall decline in the number of children in foster care." While CFSA is at the forefront of the "village" that cares for children who need our help, we recognize the important role that all of our partners play in making this system one of the best in the nation.

On behalf of the entire staff at CFSA, I want to thank Mayor Muriel Bowser for making CFSA an Administration priority and the Council of the District of Columbia for your continuous support of our work on behalf of children in the District of Columbia.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
PERFORMANCE OVERSIGHT HEARING: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004**

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**Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)  
Responses to Post-Hearing Follow-up Questions  
March 4, 2020**

- 1. During the hearing, there was a good discussion about the mental health redesign and upcoming enhancement. Would you please provide a list of the proposed or upcoming enhancements to the mental health redesign to ensure the committee has a full list? (e.g. adding a nurse, services for parents)**

The mental health redesign has been enhanced with the following:

- Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner: Conducting initial screenings and mental health evaluations for children entering care.
- Long-term Mental Health Provider: Executed a contract with MBI Health Services to provide therapy to children and birth parents in need of long-term support.
- Therapist: Recruiting for a fourth therapist to provide short term therapy and crisis management support.

- 2. [Q47, p. 76] 209 students received tutoring services in FY19 as compared to 285 in FY18. It should also be noted that the tutoring budget was cut by \$250,000 between FY18 and FY19. Last year, when we asked about the cut, we were told that it was a result of switching from two providers to one, not because fewer students would be served.**

- a. Please explain why 74 fewer students received tutoring services in FY19?**

CFSA conducted a comprehensive review which included an assessment of service utilization to ensure that the youth connected to the service were participating and benefitting from the resource. As a result of this review, CFSA exited a total of 144 students from tutoring services on a rolling basis in FY19; meanwhile 76 students were added in FY19 for a net loss of 74 students.

- b. Are all of the students that want and/or need tutoring services receiving them?**

Yes, all children who have been identified as wanting or needing tutoring services are or are in the process of being connected to services.

- 3. [Q48, p. 78] 118 students received mentoring services in FY19 as compared to 172 in FY18. However, there was no change in funding between these two years.**

- a. Please explain why 74 fewer students received mentoring services in FY19?**

In FY18, youth who were in the process of reunifying with their families were included in the number of referrals. CFSA has since shifted the referral vetting



process to encourage social workers to connect these youth with community-based resources to prevent disruption of services upon case closure. Additionally, CFSA identified youth on the mentorship contract who were not participating in mentoring services. After consultation with their social worker, those youth were removed from linkage to the mentoring service. The lower FY19 number accurately represents youth who are actively engaged in mentoring services.

**b. Are all of the students that want and/or need mentoring services receiving them?**

At this point, the vendor, Best Kids does not have enough mentors to serve all of the children or youth who want or need mentoring services. CFSA has a meeting with Best Kids on March 12, 2020 to discuss how they plan to rectify the capacity issue.

**4. During the hearing, it was said that CFSA is seeking federal reimbursement for Motivational Interviewing (MI) under Families First. Further, it was said that if the Children's Bureau approves this reimbursement (particularly for using MI in the context of case management), CFSA may have local dollars to spend on upstream prevention.**

**a. Assuming reimbursement is approved, how much revenue (local dollars) will be available?**

The Children's Bureau has yet to issue guidance around claiming requirements for the federal reimbursement that will be available under evidence-based Motivational Interviewing; therefore, precise revenue projections are difficult to forecast at this time. If and when the Agency's updated prevention plan is federally approved, the CFSA Federal Revenue Unit (FRU) will partner closely with its cost allocation contractor, SIVIC Solutions, to develop and negotiate with the federal Regional Office a rate and claiming methodology that maximizes federal revenue and complies with those federal claiming requirements. CFSA is currently in the process of finalizing the systems infrastructure to support claiming for these costs.

**b. How does CFSA plan to spend those dollars?**

If the updated prevention plan is approved, CFSA will use its evaluation and CQI activities to work with stakeholders to assess current utilization of the existing service array, capacity needs within these programs, and overall gaps in the service array to support primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention populations. CFSA will focus both on supporting one-time needs to support families, as well as consider longer-term sustainable programming, and how best to fund those programs given the requirements and constraints of Family First.

5. [Q74(e), p. 100] At the recent CFSA Townhall, there was a discussion about kin caregivers. In that discussion, it was noted that kin caregivers can retroactively become kin foster parents. However, it was always my understanding that they would not be eligible for this without a substantiated claim of abuse or neglect.

- a. Can a kin caregiver apply to become a kin foster parent after the youth is placed with them (assuming the youth does not leave their care)?
- b. Under what circumstances?

A kinship caregiver can retroactively become a licensed kinship foster parent, if CFSA determines court intervention is needed to ensure child safety outside of the care of the parents. For example, if a family comes to the attention of CFSA and a removal has not been conducted, CFSA would enter into a short-term safety plan agreement between the parent and identified caregiver. During this time, depending on the circumstances, the parent would agree to place the child(ren) in the physical care of the identified caregiver until an expedited at-risk family team meeting (FTM) could be convened to draft a long-term plan whereby the safety of the child(ren) would be addressed. If the parent violates the safety plan whereby the child(ren) are found to be unsafe while in the care of the parent, CFSA could decide to formally remove the child(ren) and license the identified caregiver until reunification can be achieved.

6. Q76, p. 100 → The agency states in its response to question 76 that it does not track information about the types of non-biological kin relationships of youth placements.
- a. If this is true, what are the documentary requirements for being able to claim that you are non-biological (or fictive) kin?

A blood relative must complete an affidavit attesting to the fact that the fictive kin has a pre-existing relationship with the child(ren).

- b. In anticipation of oversight next year, the Committee requests the agency to start aggregating this information.

CFSA will explore the best method to track this data as it is not currently captured in FACES.

7. During the hearing, there was a discussion of the growing waitlist for the Grandparent Caregiver program.

- a. Are there available funds in FY20 (e.g. MI reimbursement or other sources) that could be reallocated to take applicants off of the waitlist?

Yes, there are available funds in FY20. CFSA is in the process of onboarding those families on the waitlist.

- b. Does CFSA expect to need additional funds for this program in FY21 and beyond?**

CFSA continues to assess the need for this program and will work with the Mayor's office on the FY21 proposed budget to ensure the program is fully funded.

- 8. During the hearing, the agency said that they would be willing to reconsider the 6-month waiting period for the Grandparent Caregiver and Close Relative Caregiver Programs. Is there a minimum waiting period that we must have or that the agency strongly believes is necessary? Please explain.**

CFSA is in the process of exploring reducing this waiting period and assessing what minimum waiting period may be necessary.

- 9. [Q81, p. 105] There was some confusion from the response to question 81 of the prehearing questions that we would like to understand.**

- a. How many families and how many individual children will be served by the Close Relative Caregiver Program?**

The Close Relative Caregiver Program (CRCP) currently serves 14 families and 25 children. The Program is newly established; therefore, no trend data is available to project the number of families and children expected to be served.

- b. What is the average (mean) allocation per child for participants of the Close Relative Caregiver Program?**

The average allocation/subsidy per child is \$18.43 per day.

- c. It was noted that the amount allocated per child depends on different factors like whether or not they receive SNAP/TANF. Please explain how the agency determines the allocation amount including all of the factors that are considered and if possible, what the resulting allocation is.**

As with the GCP and per the legislation, CFSA offsets the CRCP subsidy amounts based on the dollar amount received from TANF/SSI benefits and the age of the child.

Under 12 years old

Max GCP Subsidy	\$743.70
Amount of TANF received	\$270.00 (subtract this amount from above)
Amount of GCP Subsidy Approved	\$473.70
Daily Rate	\$15.79

12 and Up

Max GCP Subsidy	\$837.60
Amount of TANF received	\$270.00 (subtract this amount from above)
Amount of GCP Subsidy Approved	\$567.60
Daily Rate	\$18.92

- 10. [Q88(d) & (e), p. 111] CFSA issued a new Temporary Safe Haven program solicitation for FY21 and beyond in January. What types of changes are being made in this solicitation as compared to the original Temporary Safe Haven solicitation?**

There were minor changes made to the solicitation to reflect lessons learned from our partnership with NCCF. For example, there were revisions to definitions, additions of language from modifications that have been made to NCCF's contract and clarifications of some processes.

- 11. Will the changes to the transportation portion of the NCCF contract result in savings?**

No

- a. If yes, how much?**

Not applicable

- b. How does the agency intend to use the savings?**

Not applicable

- c. Could they be used to reduce the waitlist for the Grandparent Caregiver Program?**

Not applicable

- 12. Last year, in the prehearing responses, CFSA provided the number of placement changes for youth in NCCF's care (203 placement changes occurred in FY18 and a total of 137 unique youth moved a total of 203 times, excluding moves to kinship and pre-adoptive homes). However, this year, in response to Q92(c), the agency said it does not track placement changes by agency. During the hearing, CFSA said they would follow-up with the requested information.**

While this data was provided last year for NCCF, it was done so inadvertently as CFSA provided data for all children in foster care, rather than strictly for NCCF. CFSA does not track placement changes in this manner.

- 13. [Q126(a), p. 176] There is a major drop-off in the number of youth participating in OYE's pre-college services program in FY19 (33 v. over 200 in FY18). During the hearing, CFSA said they would follow-up with an explanation.**

In FY18, the Office of Youth Empowerment (OYE) supported all 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. However, in FY19, CFSA shifted practice to utilize the check and connect model which allowed for targeted support for higher risk youth. Consultative services were extended to all 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders; however, the way in which the data was tracked differed than previous years. OYE has worked to ensure disconnected youth are placed in the YVLifeSet program to allow for stronger mentorship in the areas of employment, life skills and education. Additionally, education services were also provided by social workers on an individual basis. This information was not tracked in the traditional manner allowing for numbers to reflect inaccurately.

- 14. [Q136(b), p. 195] The number of youth between 18 and 21 in foster care that were employed full-time in FY19 was 17, compared to 54 in FY18. There is also a slight drop in part-time employment. During the hearing, CFSA said they would follow-up with an explanation as to why the numbers are down.**

During FY19, there was a decrease in the number of youth in foster care which accounts for why the data appear lower than previous years. Additionally, in an effort to streamline appropriate services for targeted youth, the YVLifeSet model instead focused on positive youth development related to areas of growth and independence. In some instances, these youth required work in alternative areas that would allow for emphasizing employment stability once placed. For example: the program would focus on mental health connectivity and or developing coping mechanisms prior to job placement.

- 15. [Q161(c), p. 223] At the CFSA Townhall, it was announced that the agency is looking for ideas for programs that relate to the assessment of birth fathers. As I know you are aware, Mary's Center has been running a very popular father-child attachment program for many years. Although it was previously funded through local CBCAP dollars, I believe this year it is continuing as a result of a grant issued through the "Child and Family Services Agency Prevention Services Grants Act of 2019."**

- a. At the hearing, CFSA said it would follow-up on whether this specific program meets the "assessment of birth fathers" category.**
- b. Please explain what the "assessment of birth fathers" category means.**

At the Town Hall, the use of "assessment of birth fathers" was referencing a CFSA strategy to assess the ability/availability of birth fathers to engage in their child(ren)'s lives once their family has come to the attention of CFSA, and to support with family preservation and reunification cases.

The Mary's Center's Father Child Attachment (FCA) program, funded in FY20 through the Prevention Grants Act of 2019, is designed to expand the range of prevention resources available in the District, specifically for fathers with young children between the ages of 0 -5 years old.

Fathers participating in the program may or may not have come to the attention of CFSA in the past but will not currently be involved with the Agency at the time of participation.

The FCA program is a primary prevention strategy to help at-risk fathers acquire and internalize parenting skills and improve their relationship with their child(ren) and would not be a program to directly refer fathers to when they are actively involved with CFSA. This intervention is a valuable community-based support for fathers who are now engaging in their young child(ren)'s lives and will support long term prevention and family strengthening efforts for children and their birth fathers. Using an evidence-based model, the program seeks to strengthen the attachment between fathers and their children, improving the mental and emotional health of children during the first five years of their lives, increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors for child abuse and neglect. The program is designed to be flexible to accommodate the needs of participants work schedules, childcare arrangements, and transportation.

**Questions from Prehearing Responses (not asked at the hearing)**

- 16. [Q13] The contract with KidsPeace National Centers is for \$999,000 and goes through 10/17/20. Is this likely to be a tipping contract requiring a future emergency?**

No. The amount of \$999,000 is the maximum not to exceed amount for the contract. CFSA is currently under capacity for the beds available and we do not envision this contract tipping before the expiration of the contract period on October 17, 2020.

- 17. [20(e)-(g), p.21] In response to question 20(g), the table with data on the number of FY20 referrals does not have complete information for a number of the services/interventions.**

- a. Please provide the most up-to-date information for each.**

See attachment with the most up-to-date information for each program.

- b. Question 20(e) asks for all of the services/interventions provided when an investigation is substantiated. It does not specify in-home cases. Is it accurate to say that the agency's response only pertains to in-home cases?**

No, the response does not only include In-Home cases. As noted in the original response, because CFSA does not currently collect data in a way that segments referral source for each of the available prevention services accessible by Child Protective Services (CPS), the charts and tables provided previously and in the attached update include the full program utilization data for these services in FY19 and FY20 to date, for all families with an open investigation, In-Home case, Out-of-Home case, or no CFSA involvement (walk-in), unless otherwise noted.

- c. **If the answer is yes, are there other services/interventions that should be listed for when youth are removed?**

Not applicable.

18. **[Q77, p. 100] In response to Question 77, the agency says that it does not track disruptions by kin versus non-kin providers. However, in response to question 71(d), the agency said that of the 13 families that experienced kin diversion in FY19, six families had reports to the hotline within three months. So clearly there is some tracking of kin versus non-kin. Please help me understand this discrepancy.**

These are two different situations and data points. A kinship diversion in CPS means that we were able to prevent the removal of a child because the family planned for the child to be cared for by kin. The agency does not track whether or not these children remain with their kin. Question 77 asks about placement disruptions which refers to a child who has been removed and is in foster care with a licensed kin provider.

19. **[Q94(a), p. 125] Have the Foster Parent Training Regulation Amendment Act requirements been incorporated into the Resource Parent-Specific Placement Factors? In other words, when determining a proper placement, is there consideration of the training already completed by the resource parent, or alternatively, the resource parent's willingness to obtain additional training?**

Yes, there is consideration. Each resource parent has an assigned resource parent support worker who meets with them regularly. The resource parent support workers are part of the Placement Administration and communicates frequently with the Placement Unit around the proper placement for children. Additionally, part of their responsibility is to track completion of training but also to recommend trainings when they determine there is a skill set that needs development.

20. **[97(a), p. 144] It appears that CFSA is calculating the foster home retention rate in a different way this year than last year. I believe that if the same formula from last year had been used in this year's responses, the CFSA retention rate would be 74% (the same as last year's). Please confirm this analysis and explain any discrepancies.**

Yes, if calculated in the same manner as FY18, the foster home retention rate would be 74 percent.

**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**MEMORANDUM**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

**TO:** Nyasha Smith, Secretary of the Council  
**FROM:** Brianne K. Nadeau, Chairperson of the Committee on Human Services  
**RE:** Closing Hearing Record  
**DATE:** 03/13/2020

Dear Ms. Smith,

Please find attached copies of the Agenda, Witness List, and testimony for the Committee on Human Services performance oversight hearing on the Child and Family Services Agency held on February 12, 2020.

The following witnesses testified at the hearing or submitted written testimony to the Committee:

1. Public Witnesses

- ✓1. Judith Meltzer, Executive Vice President, Center for the Study of Social Policy
- ✓2. Judith Sandalow, Executive Director, Children's Law Center
- ✓3. Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Senior Policy Attorney, Children's Law Center
- ✓4. Ruqiyah Anbar-Shaheen, Director of Early Childhood Policy and Programs, DC Action for Children
- ✓5. Kristina Fleming, Public Witness
- ✓6. Makiah Harris, Public Witness
- ✓7. Kiana Harrison, Public Witness
- ✓8. Dr. Cheryl Anne Boyce, Chair, Mayor's Advisory committee on Child Abuse and Neglect
- ✓9. Donte Massey, Public Witness
- ✓10. Marla Spindel, Executive Director, DC Kincare Alliance
- ✓11. Margie Chalofsky, Executive Director, Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center
- 12. Wayne Enoch, President, AFSCME Local 4201
- ✓13. Marcia Huff, Deputy Director, Young Women's Project
- ✓14. Amy Javaid, A Wider Circle
- 15. Olivia A. Chase, Public Witness

NWT



→ 16. Katie Rollins, Public Witness NWT

17.

✓ 18. Karen Feinstein, Executive Director, Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative

→ 19. Lissette Bishins, Executive Director, Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative NWT

✓ 20. Mae Best, Executive Director, East River Family Strengthening Collaborative

✓ 21. Dionne Bussy-Reeder, Executive Director, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative

✓ 22. Erica Coston, Program Director, North Capitol Collaborative and Mayfair Mansion and Paradise at Parkside

✓ 23. Melissa Millar, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Community of Hope

✓ 24. Debby Shore, Executive Director, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc

✓ 25. Cherie Craft, CEO, Smart from the Start

✓ 26. Roger Bell, Program Manager, Life Deeds, Inc.

✓ 27. Tiffany Williams, Chief Program Officer, Martha's Table

✓ 28. Leslie Allen, Maryland State Administrator, Children's Choice

✓ 29. Isabelle Suero-Stackl, Program Manager, Latin American Youth Center

✓ 30. Jordan Garrison, Associate Program Manager, Capital Area Asset Builders

✓ 31. Robinetta Rascoe, Public Witness

✓ 32. Dr. Lavonne Shaw, Public Witness

33. Christopher Nace, DC International School

✓ 34. Caroline Owens, Public Witness (*no written testimony*)

✓ 35. Patricia Sullivan, Collaborative Solutions for Communities

✓ 36. Dashonta Bland, Collaborative Solutions for Communities

✓ 37. Sthefany Pena, Public Witness

✓ 38. Brandon Rapp, Public Witness

✓ 39. Rahketa Steele, Public Witness

✓ 40. Julia Tutt, Public Witness (*for the record*)

✓ 41. Dr. Sheryl Brissett Chapman, Executive Director, The National Center for  
Children and Families

2. Government Witness

✓ 1. Brenda Donald, Director (*with addendum*)